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## **International Journal of Language and Translation Research (IJLTR) 4 (2024) 2**

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## Developing Speaking Ability of Iranian EFL Learners via Auditory Input-Enhancement

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### Abstract

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Keywords:

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enhancement

In this study, the authors tried to investigate the effect of utilizing auditory input enhancement instruction on the speaking ability of Iranian EFL learners. Based on the results of Oxford Placement Test (OPT), 50 learners out of 70 Iranian intermediate female EFL learners with the age range of 18-28 from Najm language institute were selected to participate in the study. They were assigned to one control and one experimental group. The homogeneity of the two groups in terms of speaking ability was determined by comparing their mean in speaking section of Preliminary English Test (PET) as the pre-test. The 10-session treatment was done through using auditory input enhancement for the experimental group while the control group had no treatment. At the end of the instruction period, the speaking section of another version of the PET as a post-test was administered to both groups. To test the hypothesis of the study an independent samples t-test was run on participants' scores. The results showed that the participants in experimental group significantly outperformed the participants in the control group in terms of speaking performance. The findings of this study have implications for students, teachers, and syllabus designers.

### توسعه توانایی گفتاری زبان آموزان ایرانی از طریق تقویت ورودی شنیداری

در این پژوهش، نویسندگان سعی کردند تأثیر استفاده از آموزش تقویت ورودی شنیداری را بر توانایی گفتاری زبان آموزان ایرانی بررسی کنند. بر اساس نتایج آزمون تعیین سطح آکسفورد (OPT)، 50 زبان آموز از 70 زبان آموز زن ایرانی متوسطه بین 18 تا 28 سال از مؤسسه زبان نجم برای شرکت در پژوهش انتخاب شدند. آنها در یک گروه کنترل و یک گروه آزمایش قرار گرفتند. همگنی دو گروه از نظر توانایی گفتاری با مقایسه میانگین آنها در بخش گفتاری آزمون مقدماتی انگلیسی (PET) به عنوان پیش آزمون تعیین شد. درمان 10 جلسه ای با استفاده از تقویت ورودی شنیداری برای گروه آزمایش انجام شد در حالی که گروه کنترل هیچ درمانی نداشت. در پایان دوره آموزشی، بخش گفتاری نسخه دیگری از PET به عنوان پس آزمون برای هر دو گروه اجرا شد. برای آزمون فرضیه پژوهش از آزمون تی نمونه های مستقل بر روی نمرات شرکت کنندگان اجرا شد. نتایج نشان داد که شرکت کنندگان در گروه آزمایش از نظر عملکرد گفتاری به طور معنی داری از شرکت کنندگان در گروه کنترل بهتر عمل کردند. یافته های این مطالعه برای دانش آموزان، معلمان و طراحان برنامه درسی پیامدهایی دارد.

## Introduction

Nowadays English learning is crucial because English is the international communication medium. The language is necessary for different activities, including education, politics, and socio-economics (Medgyes, 2002; Mckey, 2002). Apparently, one of the most significant parts of language learning is the speaking skill. According to Ur (1991), speaking in language learning is equal to knowing everything in that language and this is a confirmation seal on the significance of speaking skill while learning a language. It is difficult to speak in the second language especially in the English class. In fact, speaking in a second language involves the development of a particular type of communication skill, which, in turn, differs from reading and writing skills (Bygate, 2001).

In addition, Chaney (1998 as cited in Kayi, 2006) stated that speaking is the activity of making and sharing meaning through the effective usage of verbal and nonverbal sign in different contexts. Iranian English teachers were responsible for employing various methods in order to make easy learning the speaking skill in the classroom, but some used methodologies mostly cause to failure (Rahimy & Sasapr, 2012).

As it is assumed that learners of language were not able to communicate easily and correctly, they need more practice to enhance their speaking ability and the teachers tried to solve this problem and they tried different strategies; for instance, they use short questions and short dialogues in the classroom to improve the students' speaking ability (Bashir, Azeem & Dogar, 2011).

However, based on the second language acquisition (SLA) theories, there is an idea that focuses on the formal features of second language input, and its effectiveness in optimal L2 development (Schmidt, 1990). Besides, it is extensively believed that input is required in order for acquisition to happen in the process of language teaching (Wong, 2005).

Moreover, Ellis (1995) stated that input enhancement is an influential option in language teaching which makes language learners to be aware of some exact target forms in the learning situation, as well it draws the learners' attention to them. Other researchers, among them Lee and Benati (2007), claimed that input enhancement is useful for language development; nevertheless, input enhancement does not ensure that input changes into intake unless language learners are able to notice the input exposed to.

### Literature Review

According to Doughty and Williams (1998), input enhancement consists of two forms: a) typographic enhancement or written input and b) intonation-related enhancement or oral input. In this classification, the typographic enhancement is related to providing learners with input enhancement via techniques such as bolding, underlining, and highlighting the target language features. This type of input-enhancement is easy to achieve because the enhancement process is taken through the text itself. Another classification, the auditory input enhancement, refers to providing oral input enhancement using pronunciation-related features such as changes in intonation or pitch (Doughty & Williams, 1998). Based on the above-mentioned points, the researcher decided to integrate the input enhancement as one of the learning techniques in order to investigate if type of input, auditory, is beneficial to improving learners' speaking ability or not.

The main emphasis of language teaching is to provide learners with opportunities to communicate in the foreign language (Yu, 2009). In addition, speaking is an important aspect of EFL learning as it lets the learners produce the language, which is necessary for communicative objectives. Many researchers (e.g., Jindathai, 2015; Mazouzi, 2013) stated that speaking is considered as a means through which EFL learners are able to communicate with each other in order to accomplish their objectives, purposes, and state their ideas.

In addition, research has shown that the minimal exposure to speaking the target language and contact with native speakers have made Iranian EFL learners in general relatively poor at spoken English (Dahmardeh, 2009). In addition, the researcher experienced that the students face some difficulties in expressing ideas, choosing correct structures, lack of producing appropriate vocabulary and producing correct pronunciation. These problems occurred because the students have less exposure to speaking activity.

On the other hand, there is general consensus among the second language researchers that input plays an important role in the formation and development of the language learners' linguistic system. Reviewing many studies carried out on second language acquisition, Wong and VanPatten (2003) argued that “this complex and implicit linguistic system is not dependent on learner practice of language, but rather is dependent on exposure to what is called input” (p. 404).

As a teaching experience, the researcher experienced that some of the students keep silent all the time in class and they do not want to speak English. Even when they know the answer to a

simple question, they hesitate to talk. Likewise, through observations, it has been proved that L2 learners often seem passive and quiet in the classrooms. Motivating learners to interact in a classroom is accordingly a problem that most language teachers have in their classes (Tsui as cited in Liu & Jackson, 2009).

Moreover, there is not enough research to be able to state with certainty that auditory input enhancement is a proven alternative to other forms of learning, especially in Iran. In addition, no research has been conducted in literature to find if teaching this type of input enhancement, namely auditory, is effective in improving students' speaking ability. To investigate how auditory input can affect learners' speaking ability, the present study was carried out to shed lights on this issue.

Cook (2001) stated that the main purpose of language teaching is to provide most appropriate samples of language or the learner to benefit from the best input in the process of language learning. It should be mentioned that, all the activities that a teacher does provide the language learner with opportunities to face the language. In fact, it is widely believed that input is necessary in order for acquisition to happen (VanPatten, 2004, Wong, 2005).

A general finding of such studies revealed that attention is a necessary element for learning to take place. As stated by Schmidt (2001), the more attention given to input, the greater the language learning. To confirm his view, in his noticing hypothesis, Schmidt (1990) claimed that intake is that part of the input that the learner notices.

The concept of input enhancement has been emphasized in the process of teaching foreign and second languages. Many researchers, curriculum designers, and teachers make use of research studies in which input enhancement has been taken into account as one of the most important elements in language teaching processes. Therefore, having a good knowledge about the ways to input enhancement, especially auditory input would be of significance for language teachers and curriculum designers as well.

As a result, conducting the current study may be significant for teacher educators and teacher trainers as well as teachers in order to gain more awareness regarding the role of enhanced input in the process of speaking. Moreover, students could improve their speaking performance. With respect to material developers, they can draw on the results of this study to make informed decisions on how to adopt the approaches towards teaching speaking in different courses. Moreover, they may draw on the findings of the present study to reconsider the possible different

role of auditory input enhancement on the learning of grammar. This study tried to contribute to filling a gap in the literature regarding the study of this type of input enhancement on speaking ability of learners. Based on the purpose of the present study, this research question was raised.

**Q1:** Does auditory input-enhancement instruction have a significant effect on EFL learners' speaking ability? For the above research question, the following Null Hypothesis can be formulated:

**H01:** Auditory input enhancement instruction does not have a significant effect on EFL learners' speaking ability.

## Method

### Research Design

The participants of this study were selected based on convenience sampling method; therefore, this study enjoyed a quasi-experimental design (Mackey & Gass, 2016) with pre-test, treatment, and post-test design. Auditory input enhancement was considered as the independent variables while the learners' speaking ability was the dependent variable. Furthermore, all participants were female intermediate EFL learners, so gender and language proficiency was considered as the control variable of the study.

### Participants

The participants of this study were 70 Iranian intermediate EFL learners studying in Najm language institute. They shared the same linguistic and cultural background and they were Persian native speakers whose age ranged from 18-28. Only those learners whose scores were one standard deviation below and above the mean were chosen based on their performance on Oxford Placement Test (OPT). The participants were female learners who were studying English for three years and they were at the same level of language proficiency based on the language institute's placement test. However, the researcher used OPT test to ensure the students' homogeneity at the beginning of the study.

### Sampling Method



Fifty learners whose OPT scores fell between one standard deviation below and above the mean were selected to participate in the study. They were assigned to two classes. One of these classes, containing 25 homogenous participants, was considered as the control group and the other class, containing another 25 homogenous participants, was considered as the experimental group. The experimental group received auditory input enhancement technique as their treatment and the other control group followed the method suggested by the language institute.

### **Instruments**

The instruments used in different stages of the current research were; a language proficiency test (OPT) and speaking pre-test and post-test.

#### **Oxford Placement Test (OPT)**

Oxford Placement Test, which contains 60 items, is a standard test of proficiency. As a Proficiency test, it is expected to be norm-referenced and is intended to “measure global language abilities” (Brown, 2005, p. 2). One specific feature of a proficiency test, as a norm-referenced test, is that it should produce “scores which fall into a normal distribution” (p. 5), which allows relative interpretations of the test scores in terms of “how each student’s performance relates to the performances of all other students” (p. 4). The second distinctive feature of the test is that “the test must provide scores that form a wide distribution, so that interpretations of the differences among students will be as fair as possible” (p. 8). The OPT provides reliable and efficient means of placing students at the start of a course for teachers (Allan, 2004) (See Appendix A).

#### **Speaking Pre-test**

In order to measure the learners’ speaking ability, the researcher used the speaking section of Preliminary English Test (PET) as a pre-test. According to the official websites of Cambridge ESOL, PET is an exam for people who can use every day written and spoken English at an intermediate level. It covers all four language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking.

The speaking practice test in PET consists of four parts and the students were allowed to take interview about 10-12 minutes. In part one, of the speaking test, the examiner asked some questions about personal information of the students and each candidate interacted with the interlocutors

about 2-3 minutes.

Part two of the speaking test, was about simulated situation based on a visual stimulus which through these stimuli, the candidates interacted with each other. Making and responding to suggestions, discussing alternatives, making recommendations and negotiating agreement were recommended in this part which normally takes 2-3 minutes.

In part three of the speaking test, the candidates talked for up to a minute each about one photo on a related topic. This part was based on extended turn, responding to photographs and managing discourse in a longer turn which needs 3 minutes.

Part four was based on general conversation and the candidates talked about their likes/dislikes, preferences, experiences, habits, etc. They also talked and discussed on the topic of part 3 which took about 3 minutes' time. (See Appendix B). The purpose of the speaking pre-test was to determine whether or not the participants were homogeneous in their speaking ability.

### **Speaking Posy-test**

In order to obtain the scores of the participants on speaking performance, the speaking section from another version of PET other than the one used for pre-test was administered to the learners (see Appendix C). It is worth noting that the purpose of the posy-test was to compare the performance of the two groups after the treatment.

### **Speaking Rubric**

The rating scale used to rate the speaking section of PET by Jenny Quantana (2003) in this study was the one provided by Cambridge under the name of General Mark Schemes for speaking. The rating was done on the basis of the criteria stated in the rating scale including the rating scale of 0-5 which should be converted to 15 in line with the scoring guidelines (see Appendix D).

### **Course book**

The course book used by two groups was the same, as this was a main variable to be controlled in the present study. The course book is American English File Book 2(2008). This textbook is used at Najm institute for intermediate learners, which contains nine units and mainly focuses on vocabulary and grammar, at an intermediate level. This book has a pertinent CD to practice the

pronunciation and repeat the sentences and a workbook. In this study, students dealt with all four units of this book.

### **Listening Materials**

Eight listening texts were used in the current study. Four listening tasks were taught based on their course book while another four listening texts came from another supplementary course book at the time of the study. Indeed, these texts were chosen from *Tactics for Listening* (Richards, 1997).

### **Data Analysis**

Several statistical analyses were conducted to answer the research question in this study. The appropriate statistical methods were used as follows: A comprehensive descriptive statistic of data obtained from OPT was provided. The means of two groups' scores at pre-test were compared using an independent samples t-test. The inter reliability of the speaking section of the PET both as a pre-test and posty-test was calculated through Pearson correlation. Furthermore, the means of two groups' scores at posty-test were compared using an independent samples t-test in order to compare the significant difference between the groups' means and to test the null hypothesis. The data analysis was done through the 16th version of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). This chapter provided the operational steps in conducting this research. Therefore, the chapter introduced the participant who participated in this study, as well as the instruments used in this study. Moreover, the procedure employed for the data collection as well as the design, the statistical analysis used in conducting this study were explained.

### **Results**

As noticed in Table 1 below, the significance value equals .000 which is lower than the confidence level of 0.05 indicating that the means of the two groups on the speaking posty-test were statistically different. Since the mean of the posty-test scores for the experimental group is higher than that of the control group ( $11.9 > 9.64$ ), it can be concluded that using auditory input enhancement has a statistically significant and positive effect on the speaking of EFL learners; therefore, the null hypothesis of the study is rejected.

**Table 1**

*Results of Independent Samples T-Test for the Scores of the Two Groups on the Speaking Posy-test*

<b>Independent Samples Test</b>										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances						t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Speaking posy-test	Equal variances assumed	.006	.937	-5.548		.000	-2.280	.40743	-3.09	-1.46
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.5	48.0	.000	-2.280	.40743	-3.09	-1.46

To determine the strength of the findings of the research, that is, to evaluate the stability of the research findings across samples, effect size was also estimated. To calculate Cohen's d for independent samples t-test, the researcher used the following formula in line with Cohen (1988):

$$\text{Cohen's } d = (M2 - M1) / \text{SD pooled}$$

where:

$$\text{SD pooled} = \sqrt{((\text{SD1}^2 + \text{SD2}^2) / 2)}$$

$$\text{Cohen's } d = (11.92 - 9.64) / 1.435009 = 1.588841$$

Therefore, the Cohen's  $d$  calculated for the post-test scores of the control and experimental group was 1.58 which is considered to be a large effect size and thus according to Cohen (1988), the findings can be safely generalized across different samples.

### Discussion

The present study aimed to find if using auditory input enhancement has a statistically significant effect on the speaking of EFL learners. The results of independent samples t-test indicated that using auditory input enhancement has a statistically significant and positive effect on the speaking of EFL learners.

With respect to the role of input in language learning, the present findings support the findings of the previous research conducted by Fahim and Vaezi (2011) which is on the effectiveness of visual/textual input-based enhancement on the acquisition of Verb-Noun lexical collocations by Iranian EFL intermediate learners and concluded that visual/textual input-based enhancement can be as beneficial as conventional method of teaching.

Likewise, the present findings are in line with the findings of Motlagh and Nasab (2015) who carried out a study to find out the role of input enhancement as positive factor and its impact on L2 vocabulary and they proved that using inputs were effective in responding to target vocabulary words and using input enhancement to answer target words are the most useful factors in the process of vocabulary learning.

In line with results of this study regarding the effectiveness of auditory input enhancement on learners' vocabulary learning, Dastjerdi (2011) investigated the role of input enhancement in teaching compliments. The result proved that the experimental group who were exposed to input enhancement performed better than the control group, indicating that the nature of speech acts could be employed in helping learners improve their interlanguage pragmatics.

Additionally, the findings of the present study are in favor of the results of the research done by Rezvani (2011) who conducted the study to investigate the role of output task and input enhancement in acquisition of collocations. The results revealed that both instructions had significant effect on acquisition of grammatical collocations. However, input enhancement group outperformed the output group.

Findings of this study are in line with the results of the study done by Khoii and Tabrizi (2011) who examined the role of input enhancement through multimedia on the improvement of EFL learners' writing ability. The results revealed that input enhancement had a significant effect on learners' writing and promote learners' awareness in L2 contexts.

Moreover, this study also supports the study conducted by Seyedtajaddini (2014) on the impact of audio input enhancement on EFL learners' grammar learning from varying proficiency levels. The findings of the study proved that there is a significant difference between two groups depending on the use of audio input enhancement indicating that the highly proficient learners outperformed the low proficient learners.

Findings of this study are in line with the results of the study by Motlagh and Nasab (2015) who investigated the role of input enhancement on L2 vocabulary. The results of their study showed that three types of inputs were effective in responding to target vocabulary words. These results proposed that using input enhancement in answering target words are the most useful factors.

For testing the research hypothesis, a comprehensive description of the finding was provided in this chapter. The description was followed by data analysis related to the participant selection process at the time of pre-testing, the post-test, and the hypothesis testing. The final section of this chapter was devoted to the discussion section to justify the findings of the study.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results of the current study, it can be concluded that language learning especially speaking ability simply cannot take place without having exposure to a sort of language input and various audiovisual input has the potential to provide the necessary language input for SLA improvement mainly in EFL contexts where social interaction as a basis of language input does not exist or is limited.

Through auditory input enhancement, students paid more attention to the words or points and they could enhance their learning ability and consequently their speaking performance. Therefore, it can be concluded that the main reason behind the efficacy of auditory input enhancement in the present study was that the method has attracted the attention of the learners which is exactly in line with the noticing hypothesis stated by Schmidt (2001). Moreover, the prior research done by researchers such as Krashen (1985) led them to put an increased emphasis on the role of input in

the learning of a language. Such researches have mainly concentrated on the importance of input in increasing the learners' knowledge of the target language.

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# Impact of Incorporating Input-based Tasks in IELTS Speaking Courses: Task Response, Accuracy, and Fluency in Focus



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## Abstract

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Keywords:

IELTS Speaking Courses, Input-based Tasks, Task Response, Accuracy, Fluency

The main objective of this research was to explore the effect of input-based tasks in the IELTS speaking test. For this purpose, 40 subjects who were advanced EFL learners in Danesh Pajouhan, Isfahan, Iran were randomly selected as the sample of study 20 of whom were assigned as the experimental group and the rest as the control group. While the control group received the traditional input, the experimental group received input in the form of task-based activities, referred to as input-based tasks in problem-solving tasks and jigsaw tasks. As the finding of the data analysis show, after the treatment, there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and control group in terms of task response, accuracy and fluency. The findings of this study can be useful for second language learners, second-language teachers and curriculum designers.

بررسی تأثیر گنجاندن وظایف مبتنی بر ورودی در دوره‌های مکالمه آیلتس: پاسخگویی به وظایف، دقت و تسلط در تمرکز هدف اصلی این تحقیق بررسی تأثیر وظایف مبتنی بر ورودی در آزمون اسپیکینگ آیلتس بود. بدین منظور ۴۰ نفر از زبان آموزان پیشرفته زبان انگلیسی در دانش پژوهان اصفهان به طور تصادفی به عنوان نمونه پژوهش انتخاب شدند که ۲۰ نفر از آنها به عنوان گروه آزمایش و بقیه به عنوان گروه گواه قرار گرفتند. در حالی که گروه کنترل ورودی سنتی را دریافت می کرد، گروه آزمایش ورودی را در قالب فعالیت های وظیفه محور دریافت می کرد که به عنوان وظایف مبتنی بر ورودی در وظایف حل مسئله و وظایف اره مثبت کاری اره مویی نامیده می شود. همانطور که یافته های تجزیه و تحلیل داده ها نشان می دهد، پس از درمان، بین گروه آزمایش و گروه کنترل از نظر پاسخ به کار، دقت و روان بودن تفاوت آماری معنی داری وجود داشت. یافته های این مطالعه می تواند برای زبان آموزان زبان دوم، معلمان زبان دوم و طراحان برنامه درسی مفید باشد. واژه های کلیدی: دوره های مکالمه آیلتس، وظایف مبتنی بر ورودی، پاسخ به وظایف، دقت، تسلط در کانون توجه

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## Introduction

Many think Task-based instruction (TBI) can be considered an alternative method to traditional/conventional language teaching methods due to the fact that it favors a methodology in which functional communicative language use is aimed at and strived for (Brumfit, 1984; Willis, 1996; Ellis, 2003). Moreover, TBI is considered to be an effective approach in language teaching as it creates a learning environment in which learners have free to choose and use the target language forms in such a way that they think they can better achieve the aim of accomplishing defined communicative goals (Willis, 1996, Ellis, 2003).

In pedagogy, the impact of tasks and their definitions has been a very long tradition especially when it comes to communication and speaking in teaching a language. In fact, the beginning of what we call communicative activities goes back to the 1970s and 1980s (Crookes, 1986). The “communicative activities” gradually have been replaced by the word “tasks” (Bygate et al., 2001). Why they are considered significant goes back to when they were used in learning and teaching settings (Bygate, 2000, p. 186).

Models in language that form TBI are (structural, functional and interactional). What it is said is that TBI is not connected to every model but covers all three models in a language completely. It is noteworthy to say that vocabularies are central to the use of language and learning. Vocabularies are needed especially those which are considered to be linked to the tasks and can be used again after completing tasks (Vasheghani Farahani & Pahlevansadegh, 2018). Conversation and speaking modules are the central parts of one language and the key to the acquisition of language. There is a belief that, in TBLT, tasks play a vital and central role in learning a language.

Richards and Rodgers (2001, pp. 228-289) put its key theory of learning as follows:

- 1) providing input and output which are necessary for processing of language acquisition.
- 2) accomplishment in one task and its activity motivates learning and speaking in pupils.

TBLT is said to have the main role for a student who seeks to accomplish the task. Actually, as a result of this, one individual may obtain some roles such as participating in a group, monitoring, risk-taking and being innovative (Oxford, 2006; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The instructor also plays several roles as to be a selector and sequencer of tasks, preparing them for

doing tasks, guide, strategy instructor and assistance provider (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

TBL has an advantage in the use of language in order to have meaningful communication. In this respect, TBL has highly to do with Content-Based Instruction combining learning of a language and subject content itself. Both methodologies pave the way for integrating skills in language like reading, writing, speaking and listening, as well as subskills like the development of fluency and accuracy. Ellis (2003, p. 65), considered TBL the most effective element in interaction in society and establishing established among individuals as a means for input for acquiring also using negotiation skills and communicative skills in the best way.

It is said, in the literature, that two programs applied TBI in second-language teaching and learning. One of them was the Malaysian Communicational Syllabus (1975) and the other was Bangalore Project. They both used a communicative framework for the programs (Richards & Rodgers, 2001 & Prabhu 1987 &). These programs were designed for a short period of time; however, they attracted the attention of scholars in the domain of language teaching and learning and caused hot debates about their efficiency and creation of similar programs (Beretta & Davies, 1985; Prabhu 1987; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

The most important term in TBI is the word task, which has been defined in a number of ways. In our everyday life, a task is defined as our ordinary goal-directed activities, which are common in our lives like writing a letter to a friend, doing homework, preparing the, and driving to work (Ellis, 2003). However, as far as second language teaching and learning are concerned, it is defined as a special kind of activity that is mostly on the meaning that the learners use in the target language with the aim of accomplishing a specific kind of task (Nunan, 1989; Skehan, 1996, Bygate, Skehan & Swain, 2001).

It was in the 1950s that tasks were considered part of vocational programs and their application was extended to education 1970s (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). After that in the 1980s, a wide range of proposals came into being for the purpose of TBI in second language teaching. This widespread use of TBI in language teaching and learning has caused many to believe that tasks are very important research tools in second language teaching and learning (Ellis, 2000).

Nunan (1989) suggests that tasks should be created in such a way that they can encourage learners to feel the need and to make an effort to complete them. In other words, it is through the



tasks that students are given a “purpose to use the target language” (Lee, 2000, p. 30). Indeed, in such purposeful activity, learners are not supposed to apply a certain number of language forms; rather, they are expected and encouraged to construct and apply the forms and functions of target language use in their own way with the help of the teacher which is not immediate correction. In this regard, the role that the teacher plays is to observe and facilitate this process (Lee, 2000).

For accomplishing the meaning-focused and communicative nature of the designed tasks, Skehan (1996) proposes the tasks should be designed in such a way that they have a relationship to the real world. The logic behind this idea is that such a relationship with the real world will create more meaningful and authentic language focuses. According to Ellis (2003) and Nunan (1989), authentic tasks are the ones that have similar patterns in the real world. As the tasks have dual aspects of being pedagogical and authentic, TBI is seen as an approach to prepare the ground for learning the language in such a way that it is appropriate for all skills (Willis, 1996).

Literature shows that tasks have useful applications in the oral performance of second language learners (see for example Bygate, Skehan & Swain, Crooks & Gass, Day, Klippel, Ur, cited in Willis, 2003). As an example, Skehan (1996), believes that tasks should be evaluated in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity of language and that these skills are taught in balance of all these three aspects.

Tasks created for speaking are constructive in that they will fulfill the requirements to practice the target language in a communicative language. In this way, fluency and accuracy can be achieved and promoted through these pedagogic tasks (Brumfit, 1984). As a result, in the process of designing the tasks, the important factor is to assess the difficulty level of the designed tasks (Skehan, 1996). As Skehan puts it, students will not practice the tasks diligently if they are given tasks that are lower than their level of language; therefore, they will not achieve their goals in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity.

Accordingly, many L2 learners are required to have good command of accuracy, fluency and task response while performing speaking tasks. One of the situations in which L2 learners must demonstrate their speaking ability is when they sit for high-stakes tests like IELTS or TOEFL. In any standardized test one of the skills to be measured is speaking whose scoring depends largely on accuracy, fluency, and task response. To provide candidates with an appropriate level of preparation for the speaking task of exams at least one-fourth of any IELTS or TOEFL preparation courses are devoted to the skill of speaking.

The study addresses the paucity of research on the employment of task-based instruction in IELTS preparation-speaking classrooms. Although task-based instruction has been investigated in EFL classrooms, little research has been conducted in IELTS-speaking classrooms. Thus, it may provide general information for IELTS preparation program planners by providing an additional tool for the improvement of students' speaking skills.

At the local level, the study may contribute to the re-thinking and re-design of IELTS speaking courses in the curriculum renewal process in Iran and, in turn, encourage a more thorough examination of task-based instruction in other areas. In addition, the results of this TBI research can help teachers to create and design more focused-based tasks with the aim of fulfilling specific goals and needs.

### **Review Literature**

Task-based instruction has been investigated in second language teaching and learning. However, for a better understanding of the crux of the matter and in order to gain an understanding of the theoretical and applied aspects of the study, some of the related studies are reported. Finding that a task-based approach is the best way to be used in EFL speaking classes, Khomeijani Farahani and Khaghani Nejad (2009) investigated the diverse effects of task-based techniques with respect to gender and their impact on speaking level development. The results showed: 1) the effects of task-based activities on different genders; 2) understanding development as well as differences between male and female speaking levels.

Erten and Altay (2009) conducted research on the impacts of task-based group activities on individuals' collaborative behaviors in EFL-speaking settings. The purpose of that was to investigate: 1) the various effects of these activities as well as topic-based activities; and 2) the potentiality of developing collaborative effects on pupils.

To see if the effects of playing a role in learners' oral performance are successful, Aliakbari and Jamalvandi (2010) carried out research to see the effect of role-playing on EFL learners' speaking. The aim was to discover whether the task-based approach model in terms of role-playing could cause any significant changes in speaking in both the experimental group and the control group.

All the research above showed that all experimental groups performed better in comparison to the control group in the post-test period. Task-based activities involved more collaboration, leading to a better learning experience. These tasks helped them overcome obstacles in their

speaking and difficulties like asking for help in various conditions as well as being able to produce and talk about ideas. To put it in a nutshell, they became more like an interrogator rather than being interrogated. For teaching English in two classes, Lopez (2004) did research on task-based instruction instead of the presentation-practice-production (PPP) approach. The results of his experimental research showed that students who received TBI outperformed the other students, which can be due to the fact that students with TBI used language to do things like solve problems, do drills, and have access to information. He concluded that students who experienced real language could deal effectively with real-life situations. He found out that teachers, regardless of their background, should be trained before they go for the course.

In another study, Muller (2005) applied TBI to a small number of weak students at a private English school in Japan. For his teaching, he used a vocabulary-focused lesson from the presentation practice production (PPP)-based textbook. He also used Willis's (1996) task structure, which was as follows: Performing a communicative task, planning a report of the performance, and reporting the task results to the class. For relating tasks to the units of the textbook, he first made a list of vocabulary from each textbook and assigned the topics to the vocabulary list. The results of the research showed that the task and the subsequent planning and reporting stages did not fulfill the criteria or features of task-based lessons; however, his approach did not prove that TBL can be used with low-level learners who may not be ready for the full version.

In another study, Al Nashash (2006) did research in order to explore the effect of a task-based program for teaching productive English language skills on the development of first-year secondary female students' oral and written skills at a secondary school in Amman. What he found as the results of this research was that, in comparison to conventional methods of teaching, the students' speaking and writing skills improved due to task-language teachings designed for them.

Furthermore, Lochana and Deb (2006) did research to investigate the impacts of TBI on language teaching and learning. They wanted to see if task-based teaching can increase language proficiency and if tasks can encourage learners to participate in the learning process. For this research, they designed an experiment in which non-task-based activities in textbooks were converted into task-based ones. The findings showed that TBI can enhance the proficiency and motivation of learners. In another study, the possible effects of task repetition and task type on fluency, accuracy, and complexity were investigated by Birjandi and Ahangari (2008). They assigned 120 subjects to six groups. The results indicated that the oral discourse, in line with the

fluency, accuracy, and complexity of the subjects, improved significantly as a result of task repetition and task type.

Such reports all indicate that TBL can have positive impacts on second language teaching, encouraging teachers to feel comfortable applying TBL in their classrooms. TBL also prepares the ground for learning the second language through such factors as exposure, meaningful use, motivation, and language analyses, as indicated by Willis (1996). This short review showed that although TBI has been investigated and many of the reports indicate the positive impacts of TBI in second language teaching and learning, there is still a need for further research with a focus on the IELTS speaking test as it has not been well researched.

### **Research Questions**

This study aimed at investigating the impact of task-based learning, including problem-solving and jigsaw tasks, in IELTS speaking preparation classes on the speaking ability of Iranian IELTS candidates. In other words, this study tried to measure the effect of using task-based language teaching versus traditional teaching of speaking in IELTS classes on Iranian candidates' accuracy, fluency, and task response. For this purpose, the following questions were proposed:

Q1. Does implementing tasks in IELTS speaking preparation classes have any significant effect on Iranian IELTS candidates' speaking accuracy?

Q2. Does implementing tasks in IELTS speaking preparation classes have any significant effect on Iranian IELTS candidates' speaking fluency?

Q3. Does implementing tasks in IELTS speaking preparation classes have any significant effect on Iranian IELTS candidates' speaking task response?

## **Method**

### **Design**

This study was true-experimental study in nature owing to the fact that it involved an experimental group, a control group and a post test.

### **Participants**

The population of this study consisted of IELTS candidates studying at two IELTS preparation centers in Isfahan, Iran, which consisted of both females and males. 40 candidates who were

intermediate EFL learners in Danesh Pajouhan, Isfahan, Iran, and who scored 5–6 on a retired IELTS test were selected as the participants of this study. They were male and female, assigned to two groups each with 20 candidates.

### **Procedures**

One of the groups received task-based language teaching in the class, called the experimental group, in 10 sessions, each lasting 90 minutes. The treatment included assigning participants in the experimental group to four-member groups and presenting problem-solving and jigsaw tasks to them. In order to enable students to carry out the tasks effectively, grammatical structures and new words they needed were pre-taught to them, which served as linguistic input.

The other group, the control group, received the center's instruction procedures, which are elaborated in the following: First, students introduced themselves and exchanged personal information in order to warm up, then the teacher or researcher conducted the first process of asking questions in accordance with the form in IELTS, from personalization to the most general types (parts 1, 2, and 3 in IELTS).

As well as that, to boost their vocabulary knowledge, students are required to read some texts to become familiar with advanced academic word lists, which might be useful in any skill in IELTS, especially in the context of speaking. After 20 minutes of reading texts, word building and family words are mentioned by instructors to make them know about the structures of words as well as understand them.

### **Data Collection**

#### **Retired IELTS test**

To ensure the homogeneity of all participants, they were asked to sit for a retired IELTS test. This test was adapted from the Cambridge IELTS Series, which published past papers. By so doing, there was no need to estimate the reliability of the test because it was already reliable. This test included four sections testing all four language skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The reading section consisted of three reading passages that included 40 questions and lasted for 60 minutes. Listening also took 45 minutes.

#### **IELTS Speaking**

To assess the candidate's speaking ability prior to the beginning of the experiment and after the experiment, a speaking test from IELTS was adopted. The two tests were selected from past papers in 2017 and were reliable and valid. The tests were scored by an expert who had 7 years of experience in teaching IELTS courses and was an IELTS examiner cooperating with the British Council.

### **Interrater- reliability**

To ensure that the scores were reliable, two IELTS raters were invited to join the research. One of the raters was male, and the other was female. They were master's holders in TESOL and were former IELTS examiners. In addition, they had years of experience teaching IELTS courses at different institutions in Iran.

### **Rubric for rating IELTS speaking**

For assessing the speaking performance of the subjects, there needs to be a valid and reliable rubric. For this reason, the rubric designed and produced by the British Council was used, as it was already valid and reliable.

### **Figure 1**

*IELTS Speaking band descriptors (public version)*

<b>IELTS Speaking band descriptors (public version)</b>			
<b>Band</b>	<b>Fluency and Coherence</b>	<b>Lexical Resource</b>	<b>Lexical Resource Pronunciation</b>

9	speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction; any hesitation is content related rather than to find words or grammar. Speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features develops topics fully and appropriately.	uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics. uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately.	uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately. produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech.	uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety. sustains flexible use of features throughout is effortless to understand
8	speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language. develops topics coherently and appropriately.	uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning. uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skillfully, with occasional inaccuracies. uses paraphrase effectively as required.	uses a wide range of structures flexibly. produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/non-systematic errors	uses a wide range of pronunciation features. sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses. is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility.
7	speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence. may demonstrate language related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction. uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility.	uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics. uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation, with some inappropriate choices. uses paraphrase effectively.	uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility. frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist.	shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 8.

6	is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation. uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately.	has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies. generally paraphrases successfully.	uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility. may make frequent mistakes with complex structures, though these rarely cause comprehension problems.	uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control. shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained and can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times.
5	usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going. may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers. produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems.	manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility. attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success.	produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy. uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems.	shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 6.
4	cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction. links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence.	is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice. rarely attempts paraphrase	produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare. errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding.	uses a limited range of pronunciation features. attempts to control features but lapses are frequent. mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener.



3	speaks with long pauses. has limited ability to link simple sentences. gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message.	uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information. has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics.	attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorized utterances. makes numerous errors except in memorized expressions.	shows some of the features of Band 2 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 4
2	pauses lengthily before most words. little communication possible.	only produces isolated words or memorized utterances.	cannot produce basic sentence forms.	speech is often unintelligible.
1	no communication possible. no rateable language.			
0	does not attend.			

### Materials for the Treatment Group

Material for the experimental group was adopted from a variety of English textbooks including Topnotch series, Interchange series, and Touchstone series. The selected tasks provided students with a list of necessary vocabulary items and grammatical structures to equip students to fulfill the requirements of the tasks. Therefore, the selected tasks served both as input and language practice for learners.

### Data Analysis

To assess the level of the subjects, a one-sample IELTS test was adopted. The results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*One-Sample Statistics*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Retired IELTS test	41	5.5366	1.07465	.16783

As the data in Table 1 reveal, the mean of the subjects was 5.53. As a result, the level of the subject who participated in this research was intermediate.

For assessing the accuracy of the subjects before the treatment, a pretest was conducted. Two raters scored the subjects. Their interrater reliability is shown in Table 2.

### First Research Question

#### Accuracy

Does implementing tasks in IELTS speaking preparation classes have any significant effect on Iranian IELTS candidates' speaking fluency?

**Table 2**

*Pre-test of Control Group*

		Correlations	
		Rater1	Rater2
Rater1	Pearson Correlation	1	.619**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	20	20
Rater2	Pearson Correlation	.619**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	20	20

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As the data can show, the Pearson correlation for rater 1 and 2 is 61. As a result, accuracy pretest has an acceptable index of inter-rater reliability.

For assessing the accuracy of the subjects after the treatment, a posttest was conducted. Two raters scored the subjects. Their interrater reliability is shown in table 3.

**Table 3**

*Posttest of Control Group*

		Correlations	
		Rater1	Rater2
Rater1	Pearson Correlation	1	.690**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	20	20
Rater2	Pearson Correlation	.690**	1

Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
N	20	20

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As Table 3 shows, the correlation between rater 1 and 2 is 69. As a result, there is an acceptable index of correlation between the two raters.

For assessing the accuracy of the subjects before the treatment, a pretest was conducted. Two raters scored the subjects. Their interrater reliability is shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Correlations of the Pretest of Experimental Group*

		Rater1	Rater2
Rater1	Pearson Correlation	1	.656**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	20	20
Rater2	Pearson Correlation	.656**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	20	20

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As Table 4 shows, the correlation between rater 1 and 2 is 65. As a result, there is an acceptable index of correlation between the two raters.

For assessing the accuracy of the subjects after the treatment, a posttest was conducted. Two raters scored the subjects. Their interrater reliability is shown in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Correlations of the Posttest of Experimental Group*

		Correlations	
		Rater1	Rater2
Rater1	Pearson Correlation	1	.730**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20
Rater2	Pearson Correlation	.730**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

N	20	20
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\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As Table 5 shows, the correlation between rater 1 and 2 is 73. As a result, there is an acceptable index of correlation between the two raters.

**Table 6**

*Paired Samples Statistics for the pre-test and post-test of the control group*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test of Control Group	3.950	20	.8721	.1950
	Post-test of Control Group	4.375	20	.9442	.2111

For analyzing the pretest of the control group the and post-test of the control group, a paired sample correlation was conducted. The results are shown inTablee 7.

**Table 7**

*Paired Samples Correlations*

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pre-test of Control Group & Post-test of Control Group	20	.631	.003

**Table 8**

*Paired Samples Test*

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre-test of Control Group - Post-test of control Group	-.4250	.7826	.1750	-.7913	-.0587	-2.429	19	.025

As the data in Table 8 shows, the sig. (2-tailed) was .25, which is bigger than 0.05. As a result, there were no statistically significant differences between the two controls in the pretest and posttest.

A paired sample t-test for the pre-test and post-test of the experimental group was also conducted. The results are shown in Table 9.

**Table 9***Paired Samples Statistics*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test of experimental Group	4.225	20	.9662	.2161
	Post-test of Experimental Group	6.550	20	.7931	.1773

As can be seen in table 9 the mean of the pretest in experimental group was 4.22 and the mean of the posttest in experimental group was 6.55. As a result, there was a statistically significant difference between two groups.

For better understanding the differences between pretest and posttest in experimental groups, a paired sample test was conducted and the results are shown in table 10.

**Table10***Paired Samples Test*

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
Pair					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre-test of experimental Group - Post-test of Experimental Group	2.325	1.1502	.2572	-2.8633	-1.7867	9.040	19	.000

As the data in data in table 8 show, the Sig. (2-tailed) was .000 which is smaller than 0.0. As a result, there was statistically significant differences between pretest and posttest in experimental groups.

For analyzing the differences between control group and experimental group in pretest, group statistics was conducted. The results are shown in table 11.

**Table 11**

*Group Statistics*

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	Control	20	3.950	.8721	.1950
	Experimental	20	4.225	.9662	.2161

As the data in table 11 shows, the mean of the control group and experimental group was 3.95 and 4.22. As a result, there was no statistically significant difference between control and experimental groups in pretest.

For better tabulating the differences between control and experimental group, an independent sample test was run. Table 11 shows the results.

As can be seen in table 11, the Sig. (2-tailed) of the groups is .35 which is bigger than 0.05. As a result, there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups in pretest.

For showing the differences between control group and experimental group in posttest, a statistics group was run and the results are presented in table 12.

**Table 12**

*Statistics Group*

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest	Control	20	4.375	.9442	.2111
	Experimental	20	6.550	.7931	.1773

As the data in table 12 demonstrates, the mean of the control group and experimental group were 4.37 and 6.55; respectively. As a result, it can be said that there is a significant difference between the two groups after the treatment on experimental group.

For better understanding the differences between control group and experimental group, an independent sample test was conducted. Table 13 below shows the results.

**Table 13***Independent Samples Test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Post-test	Equal variances assumed	.121	.730	-7.889	38	.000	-2.1750	.2757	-2.7332	-1.6168
	Equal variances not assumed			-7.889	36.900	.000	-2.1750	.2757	-2.7337	-1.6163

As can be seen in table 13, the Sig. (2-tailed) of two groups is .000. As a result, there is a statistically significant difference between two groups in posttest.

**Second research Question****Fluency**

Does implementing tasks in IELTS speaking preparation classes have any significant effect on Iranian IELTS candidates' speaking fluency?

For assessing the accuracy of the subjects before the treatment, a pretest was conducted in the control group. Two raters scored the subjects. Their interrater reliability is shown in table 14.

**Table 14**

*Inter-rater reliability for Pre-test of Control Group*

		<b>Correlations</b>	
		Rater1CPreF	Rater2CpreF
Rater1	Pearson Correlation	1	.628**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
	N	20	20
Rater2	Pearson Correlation	.628**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	20	20

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As table 14 shows, the correlation between rater 1 and 2 is 62. As a result, there is an acceptable index of correlation between the two raters.

For assessing the accuracy of the subjects before the treatment, a pretest was conducted in the control group. Two raters scored the subjects. Their interrater reliability is shown in table 15.

**Table 15**

*Correlation for posttest of Control group*

		Rater1CpostF	Rater2postF
Rater1CpostF	Pearson Correlation	1	.802**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20
Rater2postF	Pearson Correlation	.802**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	20	20



\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As table 15 shows, the correlation between rater 1 and 2 is 802. As a result, there is an acceptable index of correlation between the two raters.

For assessing the accuracy of the subjects before the treatment, a pretest was conducted in the experimental group. Two raters scored the subjects. Their interrater reliability is shown in table 16.

**Table 16**

*Correlations For pre-test of Experimental Group*

		Rater1EpreF	Rater2EpreF
Rater1EpreF	Pearson Correlation	1	.715**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20
Rater2EpreF	Pearson Correlation	.715**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	20	20

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As table 16 shows, the correlation between rater 1 and 2 is 71. As a result, there is an acceptable index of correlation between the two raters.

For assessing the accuracy of the subjects after the treatment, a posttest was conducted in the experimental group. Two raters scored the subjects. Their interrater reliability is shown in table 17.

**Table 17**

*Correlations for Post-test of experimental Group*

		Rater1EpostF	Rater2EpostF
Rater1EpostF	Pearson Correlation	1	.756**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000

	N	20	20
Rater2EpostF	Pearson Correlation	.756**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	20	20

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As the data in table 17 show, the correlation is .756. In this regard, there is a good index of interrater reliability between two raters.

For showing the differences between control group in pretest and posttest, a paired sample test was conducted and the results are shown in table 18.

**Table 18**

*Paired sample t-test for pretest and posttest of control group paired Samples Statistics*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test of Control Group	3.7625	20	.80080	.17906
	Post-test of control Group	4.2375	20	.68573	.15333

As the data in table 18 show, the mean of the pretest control group is 3.76; whereas the mean of the posttest is 4.23. As a result, there was statistically no significant differences between two groups.

For better understanding the differences between control group in pretest and posttest, a paired sample test was conducted and the results are shown in table 19.

**Table 19**

*Paired Samples Test*

		Paired Differences				
		Std. Mea n	Std. Deviati on	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	t	Sig. (2- tailed)
			Error Mean		df	

				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre-test of Control Group	-						
	- Post-test of control Group	.4750	1.24314	.27797	1.05681	.10681	1.709	.104

As can be seen in table 19, the Sig. (2-tailed) of the pretest and posttest in the control group was .104 which is bigger than 0.05 and it can be said that there were no statically significant differences between two groups in there and posttest in control group.

For showing the differences between pretest and posttest of the experimental group, a paired sample test was conducted and the results are shown in table 20.

**Table 20**

*Paired samples t-test for pretest and posttest of experimental Group*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test of experimental Group	3.7500	20	.55012	.12301
	Post-test of Experimental Group	5.6500	20	.81273	.18173

As can be seen in table 21, the Sig. (2-tailed) of the pretest in experimental and posttest of the experimental group in independent samples t-test is .000. As a result, there is a statistically significant difference between both groups.

For comparing the control group and experimental group in pretest, a groups statistic was employed. The results are shown in table 22.

**Table 22**

*Group Statistics*

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	Control	20	3.7625	.80080	.17906
	Experimental	20	3.7500	.55012	.12301

As can be seen in table 22, the mean of the control group was 3.76 and the mean of the experimental group was 3.75. As a result, there was no statistically significant difference between them.

For better understanding the differences between control group in pretest and posttest, a paired sample test was conducted and the results are shown in table 23.

**Table 23**

*Independent Samples Test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Pre-test	Equal variances assumed	3.866	.057	.058	38	.954	.01250	.21725	-.42729	.45229
	Equal variances not assumed			.058	33.667	.954	.01250	.21725	-.42916	.45416

As the independent sample t-test for posttest of both groups shows, the Sig. (2-tailed) of the groups was .954 which is bigger than 0.05. Therefore, there is not statistically significant difference between the two groups. For comparing the control group and experimental group in pretest, a groups statistic was employed. The results are shown in table 24.

**Table 24**

*Group Statistics*

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest	Control	20	4.2375	.68573	.15333
	Experimental	20	5.6500	.81273	.18173

As the data in table 24 shows, the mean of the control group in posttest was 4.23 and the mean of the experimental group in posttest was 5.650. As a result, there is statistically significant difference between two groups in posttest.

For reaching better results of the differences between two groups in posttest, an independent sample test was conducted. The results are shown in table 25.

**Table 25**

*Independent Samples Test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Differ ence	Std. Error Differ ence	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper		
Post-test	Equal variances assumed	.299	.588	-	38	.000	-	.23778	-	-	-.93115
	Equal variances not assumed			-	36.953	.000	-	.23778	-	-	-.93070
				5.940			1.41250		1.89385		
				5.940			1.41250		1.89430		

As can be seen, the sig. (2-tailed) between two groups in posttest is.000 which is smaller than 0.05. As a result, there was statistically significant difference between two groups in the posttest.

### Third research Question

#### Task Response

Does implementing tasks in IELTS speaking preparation classes have any significant effect on Iranian IELTS candidates' speaking task response?

#### Pre-test of Speaking

For assessing the differences between control group and experimental group, a group statistic was conducted. The table 26 below shows the results.

**Table 26***Group Statistics*

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	Control	20	3.8563	.58105	.12993
	Experimental	20	3.9875	.55887	.12497

As can be seen, the mean of the control group and experimental group was 3.85 and 3.98; respectively. In this way, there was no significantly any difference between control and experimental groups in speaking.

In order to reach a better understanding of the differences between control and experimental groups in pretest, an independent test was conducted. The results are shown in table 27.

**Table 27**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	<i>Independent Samples Test</i> Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper	
Pre-test	Equal variances assumed	.017	.898	-.728	38	.471	-.13125	.18027	-.49619	.23369
	Equal variances not assumed			-.728	37.943	.471	-.13125	.18027	-.49621	.23371

As can be seen in table 27, the Sig. (2-tailed) was 471. As a result, there was no statistically significant differences between control and experimental groups in pretest.

For showing the results of the differences between control and experimental groups in posttest, a group statistic was conducted. The results are shown in table 28.

**Table 28***Group Statistics*

Group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest	Control	20	4.3063	.72828	.16285
	Experimental	20	6.1000	.52815	.11810

As the results in table 28 shows, the mean of the control group was 4.30; whereas the result of the experimental group was 6.10. As a result, there was statistically significant difference between two groups in the posttest.

In order to reach a better understanding of the differences between control and experimental groups in posters, an independent test was conducted. The results are shown in table 29.

**Table 29***Independent Samples Test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Post-test	Equal variances assumed	2.675	.110	-8.917	38	.000	-1.79375	.20116	-2.20098	1.38652
	Equal variances not assumed			-8.917	34.655	.000	-1.79375	.20116	-2.20228	1.38522

As the data in table 29 shows, the Sig. (2-tailed) of the groups was .000. As a result, there was statistically significant difference between two groups in posttest.

## Discussion

### Response to the First Research Question

The implementation of activities in IELTS speaking practice courses and their potential impacts on the speaking accuracy of Iranian IELTS applicants were the first research questions addressed in this study. It was important to confirm the interrater reliability before starting the treatment process. The results in Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 demonstrate that the index of correlation between the two raters was satisfactory for both the pretest and the posttest. The data in Tables 6, 7, and 8 further demonstrate that there was no statistically significant difference between the control groups prior to and following the therapy (.025).

Tables 9, 10, and 12's post-test results for the experimental groups, however, demonstrate that there was a substantial difference between the experimental groups' pretest and post-test scores (.000).

### Response to the Second Research Question

Investigating the potential effects of implementing assignments in IELTS speaking preparation classes on Iranian IELTS candidates' speaking fluency was the second research topic of this study. The interrater dependability of the raters was examined, just like the first study question. There was a favorable connection between raters 1 and 2, as seen by the data in Tables 14, 15, 16, and 17. As a result, the index of correlation between the two raters was satisfactory. Pair sample and independent sample tests were used to compare the groups. There was no statistically significant association between the control group before and after the treatment, as shown by the results in Tables 18 and 19 (104).

However, as evidenced by the information in Tables 20 and 21, there was a statistically significant distinction between Responses to the Third Research Question:

Does implementing tasks in IELTS speaking preparation classes have any significant effect on Iranian IELTS candidates' speaking task response?

The third research question of this research was to see if implementing tasks in IELTS speaking preparation classes have any significant effect on Iranian IELTS candidates' speaking task response. For this purpose, like the first and second research questions, paired and dependent



sample tests were calculated. As the data in Tables 26 and 27 reveal, there was no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control group in the pre-test (.471).

However, differences between the control group and the experimental group were discovered following the therapy. Tables 28 and 29 (.000) display this. In this regard, it is concluded that there is a statistically significant difference between the speaking task responses of the Iranian respondents in the experimental group and control group. As a result, it can be said that the third research question's null hypothesis is rejected.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

This study looked into how a technique called TBI affects how well Iranian students learning English are able to speak. Specifically, the study examined how TBI impacts how quickly and correctly the students speak and how well they complete tasks. Two sets of students were picked at random, one to be the control and another to be the experimental group. The treatment given to a group of learners who were learning English showed that TBI can help improve their speaking skills.

This research agrees with other studies in this field. These studies were done by different people in different years. The names of the people who did the studies are: Lopez, Al Nashash, Lochana and Deb, and Birjandi and Ahangari. The studies show that using TBLI helps people become better at speaking. But this study found something different than Muller's study in 2005. Muller didn't find any evidence that teaching TBLI improves speaking skills.

This research has important ideas. This could affect the people who teach IELTS. They can use assignments that require you to give information to improve how well you speak on the IELTS test. Also, the participants can learn how to do specific exercises to improve their IELTS scores, which can help them get better results. Furthermore, those who create the IELTS course and materials can use the information. They can use the findings to create new materials.

This research had some problems that might make the results less reliable. One problem was that there weren't enough people in the study because some didn't want to take part or had to leave for personal reasons. This study only looked at the speaking part of the IELTS test and didn't look at the writing, listening or reading parts.

There are some ideas for finding out more. It is a good idea to check if giving tasks based on what someone reads can improve how well they write in the IELTS test. This could be a helpful

part of the IELTS test. It's a good idea to learn about Input-based Tasks in tests like TOEFL or GRE because those tests are known all around the world.

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**Book Review****Extending the Scope of Corpus-Based Translation Studies**

by Sylviane Granger &amp; Marie-Aude Lefer,

269 Pages, Bloomsbury, 2022

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Concurrently with the publication of Baker's influential work (1995) on corpora and translation and the corresponding rapid progress in technology, there has been a marked proliferation of newly released and highly innovative publications in this rapidly expanding domain of expertise (refer to Youdale, 2019; Vasheghani Farahani, 2022 for illustrative examples). One of the seminal works in corpus-based translation studies is the ground-breaking volume edited by Granger & Aude Lefer and published by Bloomsbury in 2022, which is widely recognized as a pioneering contribution to the field.

This text presents the structural composition of a book that aims to push the boundaries of the critical nexus between corpora and translation. The book consists of five distinct parts, which are further subdivided into nine relevant chapters. Upon initial examination, it becomes apparent that the authors have succeeded in striking a harmonious equilibrium between theoretical and practical elements. Additionally, they have gathered a lineup of preeminent researchers and scholars to produce a timely contribution that synthesizes a wide range of topics related to the thematic issue of corpora in translation research.

In the first section of the publication, a central focus is placed upon the contemporaneous dilemmas encountered and forthcoming possibilities pertaining to corpora, and their preeminent function

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within the domain of translation studies. The initial section of the manuscript encompasses two synthesized themes, wherein the first chapter expounds on the trajectory of corpus-based translation studies, examined through the analytical frameworks of Bibliometric and Scientometric approaches. The concept of Scientometrics techniques is employed extensively in the initial section of the literary work, wherein the utilization of corpora in translation research is expounded upon at significant length and detail. The discourse encompasses crucial aspects such as research methodology, research focus, corpus size and language, while also encompassing an evaluation of the prevailing research trends within this domain. The subsequent chapter of the manuscript elucidates the manner in which corpora and their pivotal function in the domain of translation can be advanced. Collectively, the authors of the initial section posit that a viable method for expanding the breadth of corpus-based translation studies would be to direct its focus toward languages that have undergone minimal investigation, possessed limited resources and remained largely uncharted.

The second part of the volume comprises two units that are aligned with the contemporary methodological and theoretical developments in the domain of corpora in translation. In a scholarly undertaking, a study was conducted which utilized two written corpora of the English language in an arduous pursuit to construct a theoretical framework for constrained communication. This term has become increasingly prevalent and claims to represent a distinct and autonomous mode of communication within a wider spectrum of constrained realities. In contrast, the succeeding segment of this section focuses on the practical implementation of various techniques of empirical translation studies to examine the phenomenon of subject identifiability in the English and German languages. By means of data triangulation, utilizing a combination of several qualitative and quantitative methodologies, as well as drawing upon a bidirectional parallel corpus of both English and German, the author has arrived at a conclusion indicating that, in both languages, non-identifiable subjects are capable of occupying the post-finite verb position, thereby necessitating that translators restructure the word order within the target language.

The third section of the literature delves into the empirical investigations within the Corpus-based Translation Studies domain. This section is encompassed within three chapters, with the primary aim of examining the syntactic properties of restricted English. The investigation involves the compilation of three written and spoken corpora for the purpose of assessing the level of similarity among the constrained varieties. Drawing upon Keyness analysis and m1234567890+

multidimensional analysis, the present study elucidates the intricate interplay between constraints and register analysis. In the second chapter, the authors are concerned with the exploration of grammatical metaphor, specifically in the context of of-constructions. This exploration is achieved through the use of a parallel corpus consisting of English-German texts, and regression modeling techniques are applied for analysis. Through a thorough analysis of parallel corpora, the authors have discovered that shifts in English-German translation pairs are not present. The final chapter of the third book discloses two notable occurrences, namely normalization and adherence to the conventions of either the source or target language. The chapter's authors have applied systematic functional linguistics and automatic text classification techniques to investigate the phenomenon of normalization in translation. Based on their findings, it can be concluded that normalization remains consistent regardless of the level of experience of the translator.

The recognition of the advantageous role played by Corpus Linguistics in the field of translation training has come to the fore (Braun, Kohn & Mukherjee, 2006). In reference to the subject matter, the concluding portion of this volume comprises of two distinct modules that are solely designed to elaborate upon the central significance of corpora in the realm of translation pedagogy. The eighth unit constitutes an empirical inquiry that endeavors to systematically elucidate the caliber of scientific translation from English to Dutch under diverse scholastic settings. Specifically, this involves conducting the experiment in two classroom environments; one equipped with a domain-specific monolingual target language corpus, and the other with a general bilingual concordancer known as Linguee. The findings demonstrated that the utilization of domain-specific monolingual target language corpora resulted in a reduced incidence of adequacy errors in the translations produced by students, as evidenced by the complete annotation of the corpora for errors. The final section of the literature details the outcomes of a classroom investigation intended to uncover the challenges students encounter during the process of rendering intricate noun phrases into understandable language. The data were acquired from a cohort of students studying specialized text translation in a French to English translation class. This study employed a fine-grained error typology approach to contrast the translation performance of students across two task conditions. Specifically, the study investigated the effectiveness of bilingual dictionaries versus two specialized French and English comparable corpora. The comprehensive analysis revealed no

statistically significant distinctions in the quantity of errors generated when employing the corpus as opposed to when not utilizing it.

One noteworthy aspect of this pioneering publication is the recognition of a significant theme, namely the successful convening of a distinguished group of accomplished and eminent researchers from diverse geographical regions by the editors. Their collective contributions have resulted in a comprehensive and valuable work that presents a cohesive and integrated perspective on the fundamental role of corpora in the field of translation research and enhances readers' comprehension.

In light of its targeted examination of corpora and their critical interrelation to translation, this book on gripping presents a substantial contribution to the literature for experienced and seasoned researchers who possess a solid understanding of this area of study and maintain a collegial mindset. However, for novice and early-stage learners who are primarily focused on acquiring knowledge regarding corpora and their interrelation with translation, this book may not hold significant value. This volume may not be suitable for novice scholars of Corpus Linguistics with a specific emphasis on Translation Studies, as it may exceed their comprehension.

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## Ethics in Political Discourse in the Light of Critical Discourse Analysis: Trump vs. Biden

Elham Shayegh\*<sup>1</sup>, Mojgan Rashtchi<sup>2</sup>, Arshya Keyvanfar<sup>3</sup>

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### Abstract

#### Available online

#### Keywords:

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), Donald Trump, Joe Biden, Norman Fairclough, Political discourse.

Maintaining ethics has always been one of the crucial concerns of different scholars all around the globe. Considering the direct impact of political leaders' attitudes on people's minds, decision-making, and behavior, maintaining ethics by politicians in society is specifically emphasized. Moreover, the battleground has given way to the cultural, social, and ideological arena in recent years. In a global village, the attitude of leading politicians has extensive side effects, locally to globally, depending on how political players use their language's power to influence people's minds. This qualitative research investigated the maintenance of ethics by the two candidates of the US Presidential Election, Donald Trump and Joe Biden, in the first presidential debate on September 29, 2020. The framework applied in this research was the Faircloughian three-dimensional critical discourse analysis (CDA) model. The results showed the failure of the two representatives of the red and blue parties to maintain ethics during the debate. More significantly, regarding ethical discursive structure, Joe Biden performed worse than Donald Trump in this chaotic debate. Although, Trump's performance cannot be considered ethical. Moreover, this paper interpreted and explained the social effects of their speeches.

#### اخلاق در گفتمان سیاسی در پرتو تحلیل گفتمان انتقادی: ترامپ در مقابل بایدن

حفظ اخلاق همواره یکی از دغدغه های مهم دانشمندان مختلف در سراسر جهان بوده است. با توجه به تأثیر مستقیم نگرش رهبران سیاسی بر ذهن، تصمیم گیری و رفتار مردم، حفظ اخلاق توسط سیاستمداران در جامعه به طور خاص مورد تأکید قرار می گیرد. علاوه بر این، میدان جنگ در سال های اخیر جای خود را به عرصه فرهنگی، اجتماعی و عقیدتی داده است. در یک دهکده جهانی، نگرش سیاستمداران برجسته، بسته به اینکه بازیگران سیاسی چگونه از قدرت زبان خود برای تأثیرگذاری بر ذهن مردم استفاده می کنند، اثرات جانبی گسترده ای دارد، در سطح محلی تا جهانی. این پژوهش کیفی به بررسی حفظ اخلاق توسط دو نامزد انتخابات ریاست جمهوری آمریکا، دونالد ترامپ و جو بایدن، در اولین مناظره ریاست جمهوری در ۲۹ سپتامبر ۲۰۲۰ پرداخته است. چارچوب مورد استفاده در این پژوهش، تحلیل گفتمان انتقادی سه بعدی فرکلای بود. مدل (CDA) نتایج حاکی از شکست دو نماینده احزاب قرمز و آبی در حفظ اخلاق در جریان مناظره بود. مهمتر از آن، در مورد ساختار گفتمانی اخلاقی، جو بایدن در این مناظره پر هرج و مرج عملکرد بدتری نسبت به دونالد ترامپ داشت، هرچند رفتار و گفتار ترامپ هم اخلاقی نبود. همچنین، این مقاله به تفسیر و تبیین آثار اجتماعی سخنان آنان پرداخته است.

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## Introduction

Scholars from various fields, such as philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and politics, have always been greatly concerned with ethics and different concepts of morality, mainly because of the crucial and direct impact of ethics on every facet of human life. During periods, scholars with different viewpoints have defined ethics in various ways. One of the eminent philosophers, Levinas (1905-1995), offered a unique philosophical definition of the “self” and “other” and the ethical responsibility of the “self” to respond to the “other” before responding to the “self.” Along with this definition, the effect of politicians’ attitudes on peoples’ minds, behavior, and decision-making is undeniable. Shapiro, a professor of political economy at Brown University, and Levi Boxell and Matthew Gentzkow, professors at Stanford University, (2017) worked on the effects of othering and polarization on society as a sign of unethical behavior of politicians. They released the result of their research to show that in the last 40 years, in comparison with other countries, including the U.K., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, and Sweden, rapid growth in political polarization among Americans has been reported, as a result of Democratic and Republican political leaders’ attitude. Shapiro’s research pointed out that individuals’ behavior and interests are directly affected by their political identity, and to develop political compromises and have an excellent public policy, individuals and politicians, must respect each other. It clears the significance of maintaining ethical concepts by political leaders.

On the other hand, it is crystal clear that politicians’ ideology shows itself through their discourse. In Van Dijk’s view, ideology is a series of ideas making the foundation of different theories, such as economic, political, and religious theories. He believed that ideology has two levels; first, the Cognitive level, which refers to basic mental objects like belief, knowledge, perception, and idea, and second, the social level, which refers to higher social relation structures like organizational structures or parliamentary democracy (Van Dijk, 1999). Discourse as a social action is determined through social norms and values and is influenced by power relations and historical procedures (Wodak, 1995). Many discourses are ideologically biased, mainly when people express their beliefs as group members (Van Dijk, 2000). Consequently, the content of such ideologically biased discourses constitutes social events, shaping public and social representations and ideologies (Sokhandan et al., 2023).



Among different discourses, political discourse is one of the most complex forms of human activity. In recent years, politics refers to people's lives conducted in organized communities rather than the battleground of conventional political parties. Significantly, politicians' way of speaking reveals their political ideology and affects their intended audience's ideological status (Beard, 2000). Altogether, the main focus of studying political discourse is on the messages generated by influential participants of political positions, such as presidents, prime ministers, government members, or political party representatives. A critical analysis of political discourse aims to show the various ways political leaders behave with people in society through the power of their language (Wodak & Ludwig, 1999). Fairclough (1989), in his book, *Language and Power*, expressed that CDA aims to investigate how power is sustained through discourse in relationships that lack transparency. The aim is to raise awareness about power imbalances, social injustices, and other societal inequalities by bringing them to the public's attention to prompt corrective action. In Fairclough's point of view, the main ideas in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) are manipulation, hidden ideology, bias, power of language, and discursive structures.

The second half of the twentieth century has witnessed an extreme increase in the ideological viewpoints of political parties. This ever-growing trend is more conspicuous between the two political parties, Republicans and Democrats (Bacon, 2018). . When people become polarized, they tend to have less empathy for others, are less tolerant of opposing views, and may exhibit more hostility towards those who hold different opinions. This can result in a weakening of social bonds and democratic participation (Bruter & Harrison, 2009). In highly polarized countries, hardly ever all members of a society can compromise over fundamental values, especially the time they are affected by the attitude of their political leaders because polarized mindsets and attitudes of political leaders have a directly powerful influence on political, social, and economic aspects of people's life (Baldassarri & Gelman, 2008). The point is that conflicts over religious, cultural, political, and moral issues have been growing increasingly in contrast with the former economic disputes.

Consequently, cultural wars by politicians are getting more substantial than physical wars. Needless to say, the growth in culture wars is impossible except through political actors' discourse. Therefore, this sick society's policies may inadequately lead to social issues (Carothers &

O'Donohue, 2019), such as increased racial prejudice, risk of war, genocide, and violent behavior (Newman, 2002 & Sunstein, 2002).

This study investigated how much the two US presidential candidates in the 2020 first presidential debate upheld ethical principles, using the Faircloughian CDA model for critical discourse analysis. Fairclough defined CDA as a social practice and suggested that the text and the procedure of production and interpretation of a text should be analyzed together in both immediate and the more remote conditions in which a text is produced (Fairclough, 1989). This widely-heard debate gives the opportunity to examine the moral concepts maintained by the candidates.

### **Research Question**

Regarding the aim of this study, the researchers proposed the following research question:

**RQ:** To what extent do the two candidates in the Presidential Election of the United States of America observe ethics in their languages in the first presidential debate on September 29, 2020?

### **Method**

This study aimed to use the Faircloughian CDA model to analyze the discourse of the current and former presidents of the USA, Biden and Trump, and evaluate how they adhered to ethical standards in their communication. Critical discourse analysis is employed to compare and contrast their discourse and determine the extent to which they demonstrated ethical behavior. The selected framework portrays a descriptive, qualitative, and comparative analysis, incorporating content analysis and comparative design. Tables and figures intend to enhance the clarity of the findings. To achieve the study's objectives, and gather data, the researcher first extracted the two candidates' speeches which had signs of unethical meanings from the text form of the intended debate in 2020. Then, they were categorized based on the selected framework. The chosen sentences were compared and contrasted by applying the Faircloughian CDA model.

To make the theoretical framework used in this research clearer, it is needed to explain that despite some differences, the main goal of almost all critical discourse analysts is to illustrate the relationship between language, power, ideology, and inequalities in societies, aiming to denaturalize the hidden power relation. Critical discourse analysis scholars bring a social and linguistic analysis of discourse together. Thus, in critical discourse analysis, scholars can

simultaneously analyze discourse at the micro-level of social structure and the macro-level of social action. In his early work, Norman Fairclough, a prominent scholar in the field of CDA, proposed a step-by-step guideline for critical discourse analysis scholars (Fairclough, 1989). Fairclough's CDA model is the foundation of critical discourse analysis because it is the first theoretical framework that provided future CDA scholars with some practical guidelines. Fairclough (2003) argued that language is a fundamental part of social life, and the dialectic relation between language and social reality is made of every social event.

On the other hand, the significance of the Fairclough CDA model is the vital definition of the relationship between language and power (Fairclough, 1989). He defined three elements of discourse: text, interaction, and social context. Through his approach, researchers can analyze various discourses through this framework based on three dimensions: Description, Interpretation, and Explanation.

**Description:** the first dimension refers to the formal characteristics of a text, including vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures.

**Interpretation:** the second dimension refers to the relationship between text and discursive interaction. Because each text is a product of a complex procedure, interpretation tries to interpret this relationship, not just the text itself.

**Explanation:** the last dimension pertains to how interaction and social context are related by examining the social factors influencing the production procedure, interpretation, and impact of communication.

Fairclough's (1989) model aims to move beyond simply describing the text and instead focuses on interpreting and explaining why and how the text is presented in its social and cultural context.

## Results

The initial aspect of the Faircloughian 3D model pertained to the formal characteristics of the text, encompassing vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures. Fairclough (1989) provides scholars with ten basic queries and some sub-questions, the answers to which can contribute to analyzing a text.

### -Vocabulary

1- What experimental values do words have?

Which categorization systems are being utilized?

Can certain words be considered ideologically contested?

Can rewording or over wording be found?

What meaningful ideological connections exist between words in terms of their meaning?

2-What relational values do words have?

Can euphemistic expressions be found in a text?

What are markedly formal or informal words?

3-What expressive values do words have?

4- Are metaphors used?

### **-Grammar**

5-What experimental values do grammatical features have?

Can we say that the agency's communication is not clear?

Are the processes straightforward as they appear to be?

Do they use nominalization excessively?

Is the construction of sentences in active or passive voice?

6-What relational values do grammatical features have?

Can you explain the type of modes being used?

Are there significant characteristics of relational modality?

Are "we" and "you" used, and if yes, in what manner?

7-What expressive values do grammatical features have?

Can we identify fundamental characteristics of expressive modality?

8-What logical connectors are used?

Are complex sentences characterized by coordination or subordination?

### **-Textual structures**

9-what interactional conventions are used?

Is it possible for a participant to influence or dictate the turn-taking of other participants?

10-What larger-scale structures does the text have?

The meanings of three terms, experimental, relational, and expressive values, are defined to enhance the clarity of the questions and framework. Experimental value pertains to how a text producer's experience of the natural and social world is reflected in the text. Relational value relates to the perceived social connection between the text producer and its audience. Expressive value refers to the text producer's assessment of social realities.

### **Description: Discourse as Text in Terms of Ethics in the First Presidential Debate**

The first presidential debate between President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump was one of the most chaotic debates in the United States, according to the news broadcasters such as BBC, Politico, and Chinese Global Times. The two candidates repeatedly attacked each other's character with interruptions and insults. The present evaluation of the presidential debate, using Fairclough's model, aimed to assess how many ethical words were used by the candidates and identify any unethical terms of behavior displayed during the debate; the researchers have analyzed the unethical aspects meticulously.

### **-Vocabulary**

According to the Faircloughian CDA model, the text of the first presidential debate is analyzed on semantic and syntactic levels. Almost 80 times, Trump and 77 times Biden uttered words, sentences, or paragraphs containing unethical comments; the signs of hostile remarks are apparent in less respectful sentences uttered aggressively by the Democrat and Republican opponents. For instance, they repeatedly accused each other of being a liar, not having a plan, not keeping their word, and so on. Along with insulting words and disrespectful sentences, making fun of the other candidate and ridiculing the other candidate can be counted as another immoral attitude, such as attacking other one's intelligence, actions, or words several times during the debate. In addition to the previous items, accusing the other and making the other interlocutor guilty without bringing clear evidence are other signs of immorality, which are seen much more than other unethical items in this chaotic debate. Items like accusing the leading member of the opposite party of being racist, not caring about people, being irresponsible, having no plan for the future, destroying the whole country, hurting American people by not making correct decisions, or attacking the family

members of the other one to make a fortune by abusing their situation were some of the examples. The frequency of each unethical item is shown in the Tables separately.

**Table 1***Insulting Words in the First Debate*

<b>Insulting words</b>	<b>Trump</b>	<b>Biden</b>	<b>Total</b>
Shut up, Liar, Ridicules, Fool, Puppy, and Clown...	5	11	16

**Table 2***Less-respectful Comments in the First Debate*

<b>Less respectful words or sentences</b>	<b>Trump</b>	<b>Biden</b>	<b>Total</b>
Nobody cares; he doesn't know what he is talking about, I'm not here to call out his lie, and I'm not going to listen to him.	4	9	13

**Table 3***Ridicule the Other One in the First Debate*

<b>Make fun of the other one</b>	<b>Trump</b>	<b>Biden</b>	<b>Total</b>
You graduated last in your class, not first in your class. You are months behind me. A lot of people died, and a lot more are going to die, Unless he gets a lot smarter a lot quicker.	9	15	26

**Table 4***Accusation in the First Debate*

<b>Accusation</b>	<b>Trump</b>	<b>Biden</b>	<b>Total</b>
accusing their opponent of being racist, not caring about people, being irresponsible, having no plan for future, destroying the whole country, hurting American people by not making the correct decision	76	64	140

Table 5 shows the frequency of ideologically contested words containing unethical signs in terms of percentage.

**Table 5**

*Frequency of Ideologically Contested Words (Experimental Values)*

<b>Items</b>	<b>Trump</b>	<b>Biden</b>
<b>Insulting words</b>	31.2%	68.7%
<b>Less respectful comments</b>	30.7%	69.2%
<b>To ridicule the other one</b>	34.6%	57.6%
<b>To accuse the other one</b>	54.25	45.7%

In the vocabulary part of analyzing a text based on the Faircloughian CDA model, the frequency of rewording, synonym, antonym, and hyponymy is another sub-question regarding experimental values, as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6**

*Frequency of Ideologically Meaning Related Words (Experimental Values)*

<b>Items</b>	<b>Trump</b>	<b>Biden</b>
<b>Rewording</b>	59.5%	40.4%
<b>Synonyms</b>	53.3%	46.6%
<b>Antonyms</b>	50.0%	50%
<b>Hyponymy</b>	75%	25%

Using euphemistic expressions, uttering formal or informal words, and being friendly or unfriendly are questions in the Faircloughian CDA model's relational values to determine to what extent the two presidents observed ethics in their language. In the first presidential debate, no euphemism was used by the two candidates mainly because the speakers wanted to have clear-cut ideas, address the exact social and political issues straightforwardly, and have the most influence on their audience. Conversely, euphemisms are typically employed to enhance the gracefulness and courteousness of a speech. However, no euphemistic terms can be identified in this turbulent debate's hostile atmosphere.

Clearly, from the beginning of the debate, both candidates intentionally tried to be informal in their speech; maybe they followed this attitude during the debate to show their intimacy, to be reliable for their audience, and also to show that they are completely friendly with people and with each other. The hostile remarks began soon due to the unethical environment of the debate. A few sentences are selected here to demonstrate the informal, unfriendly, and also antagonistic manner of their speech:

- Biden: Will you shut up, man?
- Trump: Let me shut you down for a second, Joe, just for one second.
- Biden: He is Putin's puppy.
- Trump: You're the worst president America has ever had.

Being informal and soon becoming unfriendly and aggressive is seen almost equally in the speech of the two candidates several times in the first presidential debate.

### **-Grammar**

The researchers reviewed Fairclough's various questions to determine to what extent grammatical points could demonstrate the maintenance of ethics by the two candidates. By focusing on the sentences which contain more unethical meanings, the researchers deduced that:

All kinds of SV, SVO, and SVC sentences were used several times in unethical sentences. Still, SV sentences were used less than the others, and SVC sentences attributing something to another person are present much more in unethical sentences.

All kinds of processes were used in the first presidential debate in terms of ethics:

### **Material Process**

- In 47 months, I've done more than you've done in 47 years, Joe. (Trump)
- He never keeps his word. (Biden)

### **Relational process**

- They had the slowest economic recovery since 1929. (Trump)
- He's Putin's puppy. (Biden)

### **Verbal**

- You call them super predators, and you've called them worse than that. (Trump)
- The fact is that everything he's saying so far is simply a lie. (Biden)



### Existential

- During the Obama-Biden administration, there was tremendous division. There was hatred. (Trump)
- I'm not here to call out his lies. (Biden)

### Mental

- I know the suburbs so much than you. (Trump)
- He's just afraid of counting the votes. (Biden)

### Behavioral

- He's wrong. (Trump)
- He's a fool on this. (Biden)

In unethical words, both interlocutors used more active sentences to express their meanings directly, to have the most effect on their audience, but a few passive sentences were used, either. Sentences selected as less ethical sentences meaningfully contain negative meanings, and almost all of them are unfriendly. No adequate or meaningfully necessary nominalization is seen in unethical sentences. The text comprises inside references, which show textual and contextual links and backgrounds. For example, in several sentences based on inside backgrounds, Biden and Trump tried to call their opponent down.

As evident in Table 7, regarding relational values in the grammatical part, Trump 90% and Biden 88% have used mostly declarative sentences in unethical sentences, alongside imperative, interrogative, and exclamatory sentences to call down their opponent.

**Table 7**

*Frequency of Modes (Relational Values)*

Items	Trump	Biden
All unethical sentences	130	144
Declarative sentences	117	128
Imperative sentences	5	6
Exclamatory sentences	0	1
Interrogative sentences	8	9

Both candidates had positive evaluations of the time they were responsible and negative assessments of when the other was in charge. For example:

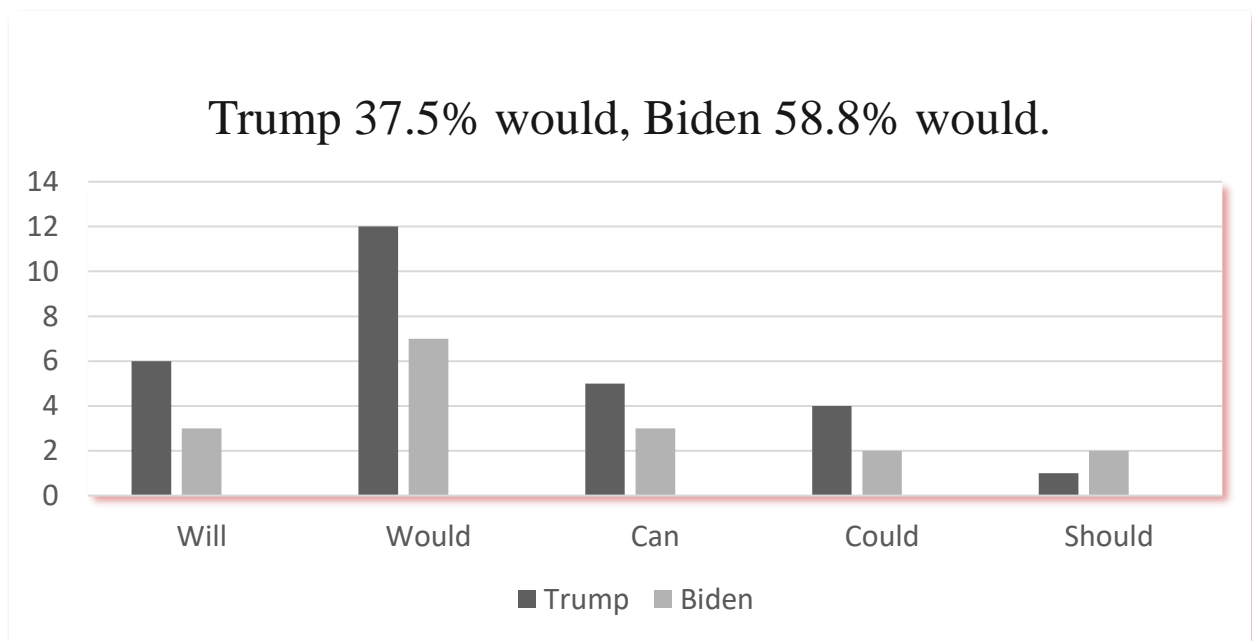
**Trump:** “Hey, Joe, let me just tell you, Joe. In 47 months, I’ve done more than you’ve done in 47 years, Joe. We’ve done things that you never even thought of doing. Including fixing the broken military that you gave me, including taking care of your debts.”

**Biden:** “We handed him a booming economy; he blew it.”

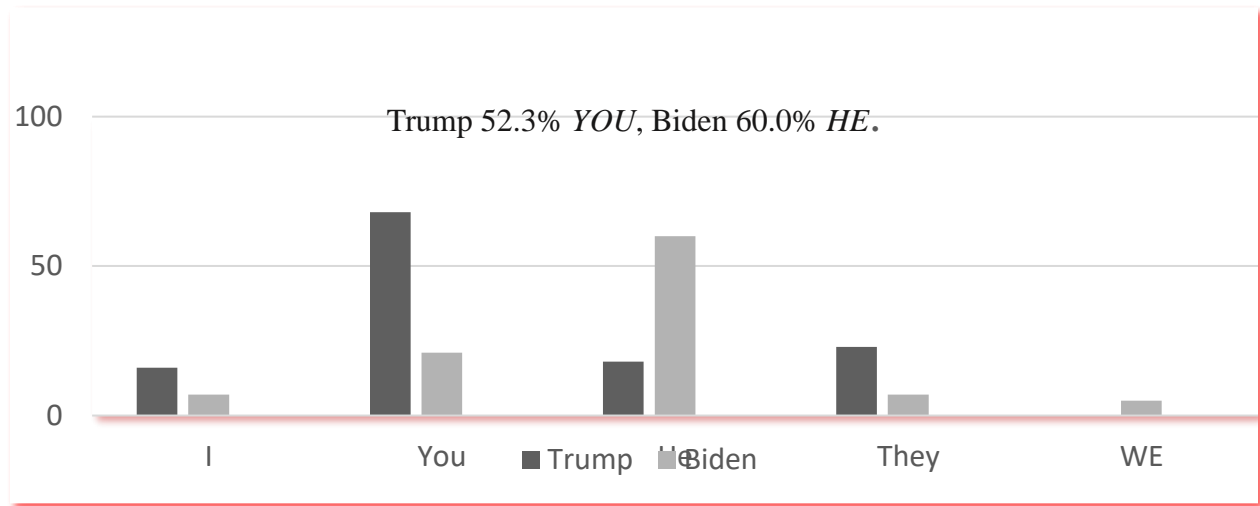
In this framework, there are two types of modality: relational modality, which indicates the speaker’s level of authority, and expressive modality, which pertains to the degree of truthfulness. The modal verb that appears most frequently in unethical sentences made by the two candidates during their speeches is “would,” which indicates probability. Figure 1 illustrates the frequency of usage for different modal verbs.

**Figure 1**

*Frequency of Modals (Expressive and Relational values)*



Pronouns YOU and HE were used more in unethical sentences to blame the other. Biden has used *He* 60 times, *You* 21 times, and *They* seven times. Trump has used *He* 18 times, *You* 68 times, and *They* 28 times. 52.3% of pronouns in Trump’s speech were *You*, and 60% in Biden’s speech were *He*, as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2***Frequency of Pronouns (Relational Values)*

As shown in Figure 2, Biden used “He” more than “You” because Biden mostly tried not to speak with Trump directly but mainly ignored him and tried to accuse Trump when he was talking to the executive, Chris Wallace, or people at home. Again, this can be considered another sign of unethical manners of Biden.

### **-Textual Structure**

In the textual structure part, the ninth question of the current framework refers to the interactional conventions and control of the turn of others. Mainly debates are held by a moderator, but Chris Wallace failed to control the debate’s rules in this debate. He repeatedly asked both candidates, especially Trump, to respect and obey the debate’s rules, which both sides had agreed to, but 128 times, Trump interrupted Biden, while Biden did it too, but much less than Trump.

Finally, the tenth and last question of description dimension is: what larger scale structures does the text have? Text structures are, Description- Explanation text, Sequence-Process text, Problem- Solution text, Cause- Effect text, Compare- Contrast text, and Time order- Chronological text. Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) explained that political discourses have multiple functions and cannot be neatly classified into a single text structure. Instead, political debates consist of various parts, with the persuasive aspect falling into the problem-solution text structure and the critical aspect belonging to the cause-effect text structure.

**Interpretation: Discourse as a Discursive Practice in the First Presidential Debate**

Discursive Practice deals with the production of a text and researchers' analysis of the process, which impacts a text's display, consumption, distribution, transformation, and interpretation. The second dimension of the selected CDA model emphasizes how the audience perceives the discourse and the potential impact it could have on society. In this debate, each candidate represented a political party in the United States of America. It had a widespread reflection on news broadcasts all around the globe. The Poynter Institute, an institute for Media Studies and a non-profit journalism school in Florida, United States-described this debate on September 30, 2020, as the worst presidential debate ever, a hot mess, a dumpster fire, and the most unwatchable debate in presidential history. In this report, Poynter reported some sentences from famous people in the United States: ABC News's George Stephanopoulos said it was the worst presidential debate he had ever seen. Holt's colleague Savannah Guthrie said her jaw just had dropped like so many in that country, and she added it had not been a typical debate, not a standard example of American democracy. CBS's Gayle King said it has been painful to watch. Washington Post highlighted: "Actually, the first presidential debate was terrific." The Conversation wrote: "The first presidential debate was pure chaos." BBC asked members of the BBC voter panel about the debate and then had a heading on September 30, 2020: "The loser is us, the American people."

Moreover, BBC had a report on September 30, 2020: "How did the world's media react?" for example, The Guardian in the UK described it as "a national humiliation." French newspaper Liberation reported: "Chaotic, childish, grueling." Italian La Repubblica's US correspondent reported: "Never had American politics sunk so low." And "Chaotic, rowdy, and based on mutual contempt." Russia's one broadcaster wrote: "one-and-a-half-hour exchange of insults." in the end, a state-run Global Times described it as: "The most chaotic presidential debate ever."

**Explanation: Discourse as a Social Practice in the First Presidential Debate**

Discourse as a social practice, which identifies how individuals communicate with others, can reveal necessary information about their characteristics, such as their individuality, social status, political beliefs, and cultural identity. The third dimension in this framework deals

with what text producers perceive from the real world and how their perception affects their personality and attitude. In this debate, the way the two candidates performed reveals how they think about their culture. Considering the number of interruptions, aggressions, insults, and impolite reactions toward their opponent, along with negative body language signals like Trump's frowns or Biden's sneers and mocking several times, clear that maintaining ethics in their speech, especially the time they are under mental pressure or they are not under normal situations, is not easy for them. However, some situations like debates are good situations to evaluate the candidates' patience, politeness, and morality because maintaining ethics in a competitive environment of debates is not easy but necessary.

### Discussion

The current researchers investigated the maintenance of ethics by Trump and Biden in the first presidential debate in 2020 to show how the two representatives of the Blue and Red parties of the USA used the power of their language to have an impact on people and as a way of communication, to what extent their discourse can affect public opinion. Choice of vocabulary and the use of specific sentences or styles is a way to attract people's attention and get their support in the election to vote for them, enhance their legitimacy, or eliminate their particular opponents by the power of their discourse. The unethical parts of Trump and Biden's speeches in this research were analyzed based on Fairclough's CDA model to show their choice of vocabulary, grammatical points, and textual structures, in terms of experimental, relational, and expressive values, alongside interpretation of their speeches and its effects on people and different Medias all around the world, and explanation of their attitude based on their performance during the debate. CDA offers scholars ways to find a relationship between discourse and society, text and context, alongside language and power (Fairclough, 2001 & Luke, 1996, 2002). Moreover, CDA enables scholars to analyze social and linguistic microanalysis (Luke, 2002). The Faircloughian model allows researchers to investigate language use in social contexts. The main goal of CDA scholars, held in common, is denaturalizing hidden hierarchical power relations in societies by demonstrating inequalities and social imbalances. CDA must cover social discourses to explain a discourse from different views between micro and macro analysis (Luke, 2002). To gain social justice, the aim of CDA, analytical techniques with a developed social theory must

be joined (Fairclough, 1989; Widdowson, 1998). Finally, Fairclough (1989, 1992, 2001) defines discourse as a process of social interaction utilizing texts and, simultaneously, a discursive and social practice. For Fairclough, CDA analyzes a text and its production procedure and attempts to discover the relationship between a text, its procedure, and social circumstances (Jakes, 1997). In Fairclough's point of view, CDA has two intrinsic elements, the relationship between the text and interaction and the relationship between interaction and sociocultural contexts. Based on what CDA scholars and especially Fairclough believed, the researcher tried to analyze the first debate to uncover the unethical signs in the speech of these two political leaders in descriptive, interpretive, and explanative dimensions. However, it is worth mentioning that applying all questions proposed by Fairclough does not help describe the intended issue in all texts. In this study, the researchers applied and answered all questions and sub-questions proposed by this model. Still, some of the applied questions were not helpful in finding signs of immorality. However, all questions and sub-questions were answered, even if they were not beneficial to the aim of the study. On the other hand, to have a better and more comprehensible conclusion, analyzing body language and the speakers' reflections and acts is essential, which has not been addressed in this framework. Therefore, the analysis of their reactions and actions depends on the perception and taste of researchers; in a way, this research is done.

The findings of the research reveal the specific choice of the vocabulary of the two candidates, the grammatical way of their speaking, and their manner in respecting the debate's rules, alongside their body language and reactions, and the social impact of their performance on American people, national Media, and international broadcasts.

### **Conclusion**

The importance of maintaining ethics and the impact of the unethical attitudes of political leaders on people's minds, attitudes, and ideologies are evident. This study discussed different ideas in the literature regarding critical discourse analysis. It signified some research findings to show the national and international side effects of political players' words to clarify the significance of this research. The current study aimed to understand the discursive structures of the 2020 presidential debate through Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model to demonstrate the extent of

maintaining ethics by the leading representatives of the Democratic and Republican Political Parties, Joe Biden and Donald Trump, considering their behavior as a sign of their Party's attitudes. Debate, by its nature, is argumentative, and maintaining ethics in a discussion is almost hard but necessary. Based on the selected framework, the current research showed to what extent both candidates argued ethics in their speeches and how they used the power of their language to impress the American voters to support them. However, the results revealed that both candidates failed to maintain ethics in their speeches. Biden performed worse than Trump because of the higher frequency of using insulting words, less respectful words, making fun of his opponent, and several accusations, besides several times of smirks and not talking straightforwardly to Trump in their conversation. While the repetitive interruption of Trump repeating his words again and again to distract Biden, and accusing Biden and his family members several times, do not let us consider Trump less immoral than Biden. The research raises an important question about the general attitude and manner of the Democratic and Republican Parties in the United States of America. It would be fruitful to pursue further research on other representatives of these political parties in the same tense situations to reach a more comprehensive conclusion to address the issue and help policymakers to find ways to avoid factions in politics turning into systematically engineered conflicts to control and manage communities, locally to globally.

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## Impact of Big Blue Button Software on Listening Comprehension Among Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners

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### Abstract

#### Available online

#### Keywords:

Big Blue Button, Listening Comprehension, Distance Learning, Online Class, Virtual Learning Platform

The present study investigated the impact of Big Blue Button Software on listening comprehension among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. The study also aimed to figure out if there was a difference between female and male learners based on the effect of Big Blue Button Software on their listening comprehension. To this end, 40 Iranian EFL learners whose level of proficiency was intermediate and who were studying in online classes participated in the study. Their level of proficiency was evaluated via Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT). The participants enrolled in a 17-session online English course. In this course, the textbook was Touchstone 2, and the classes were held by Big Blue Button as the platform. At the end of the course, the listening post-test was given to the participants to compare their listening comprehension before the treatment and to compare female and male participants. The study's findings indicated that Big Blue Button significantly improved listening comprehension among Iranian male and female intermediate EFL learners, and gender did not play an important role. The results of this study provide practical implications for teaching and learning listening comprehension and online language teaching.

### تأثیر نرم افزار Big Blue Button بر درک شنیداری زبان آموزان ایرانی در سطح متوسط

پژوهش حاضر به بررسی تأثیر نرم افزار دکمه بزرگ آبی بر درک شنیداری زبان آموزان ایرانی در سطح متوسط می‌پردازد. این مطالعه همچنین با هدف تعیین اینکه آیا تفاوتی بین زبان آموزان زن و مرد بر اساس تأثیر نرم افزار دکمه بزرگ آبی بر درک شنیداری آنها وجود دارد یا خیر، انجام شد. به این منظور، 40 زبان آموز ایرانی زبان انگلیسی که سطح مهارت آنها متوسط بود و در کلاس های آنلاین مشغول به تحصیل بودند، در این مطالعه شرکت کردند. سطح مهارت آنها از طریق آزمون قرار دادن سریع آکسفورد (OQPT) ارزیابی شد. شرکت کنندگان در یک دوره آموزشی آنلاین انگلیسی 17 جلسه ای ثبت نام کردند. در این دوره کتاب درسی 2 Touchstone بود و کلاس ها توسط Big Blue Button به عنوان پلتفرم برگزار می شد. در پایان دوره، پس از آزمون شنیداری به شرکت کنندگان داده شد تا درک شنیداری آنها قبل از درمان با هم مقایسه شود و شرکت کنندگان زن و مرد با هم مقایسه شوند. یافته های این مطالعه نشان داد که دکمه بزرگ آبی به طور قابل توجهی درک شنیداری را در بین زبان آموزان ایرانی مرد و زن انگلیسی زبان آموزان متوسط بهبود می بخشد و جنسیت نقش مهمی ایفا نمی کند. نتایج این مطالعه مفاهیم عملی را برای آموزش و یادگیری درک شنیداری و آموزش آنلاین زبان ارائه می دهد.

**کلمات کلیدی:** دکمه آبی بزرگ، درک شنیداری، آموزش از راه دور، کلاس آنلاین، بستر یادگیری مجازی

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## Introduction

Listening comprehension, particularly in English, is one of the most necessary skills to perform communication. It is regarded as the most difficult language skill to acquire (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Moreover, foreign language listening comprehension is an unforeseeable, complicated, and imperative process in developing foreign language proficiency; yet, the significance of listening in language learning has recently been noticed (Ableeva, 2010). Many researchers have performed some studies on listening and considered it an essential skill in educating and learning (Marzban & Abdollahi, 2013; Moore & Hall, 2012; Pourhosein Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011; Tabrizi & Saeidi, 2015). For example, Nunan (1998) believed that listening is the primary skill in language learning. Lacking listening skills, students can never realize how to convey meaning and communicate properly.

Considering the importance of listening comprehension in communication and the development of online learning, which has gained a unique position in education (Zhang, 2013), it is necessary to use a suitable platform to hold an online class to improve this important skill successfully. Additionally, recently, the outbreak of Coronavirus changed the way of learning from in-person education to online education. Online language learning had already been an increasingly popular and valuable method of language acquisition before the spike in demand for alternative learning methods brought upon by the Covid-19 pandemic (Kawinkoonlasate, 2020). Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate the effects of Big Blue Button, a free and famous platform for holding online classes in Iran, on listening comprehension. Different platforms like Big Blue Button, Zoom and Adobe Connect are used worldwide for holding online courses, webinars or lectures, and even online workshops. Big Blue Button, Zoom, Adobe Connect, and Skype can be used not only for delivering synchronous video conferences but also in various online learning designs such as cooperative learning (Jacobs & Ivone, 2020). These tools facilitate individualization of the learning process and cooperation in a multiplied framework (Bernardi et al., 2018).

As previously mentioned, listening comprehension is an essential skill that is a prerequisite to acquiring other language skills. However, this skill has been neglected or considered insufficient by researchers. Therefore, this skill needs to be studied more thoroughly. Moreover, not enough studies have been conducted on the abovementioned platforms that are used for teaching online classes since the emergence of COVID-19. Most of the previous studies have only focused on the

impact of online listening classes on listening comprehension (Ruiyah, 2021; Sulisto, 2021; Susilowati, 2020). Very few studies have explored the usefulness and efficiency of tools, such as Big Blue Button Software in education (Cavus & Sekyere-Asiedu, 2021; Tavukcu, 2016). Up to now, far too little attention has been paid to the effect of BigBlueButton Software on language instruction (Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2017; Schmied, 2021). Therefore, this study aimed to firstly investigate the impact of Big Blue Button Software on listening comprehension among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. Secondly, the study also examined the impact of Big Blue Button Software on listening comprehension among Iranian intermediate EFL learners in terms of gender. In line with the research objectives, the following research questions were posed:

- 1) Does Big Blue Button Software have any significant impact on improving listening comprehension among Iranian intermediate EFL learners?
- 2) Does Big Blue Button Software have any significant impact on improving listening comprehension among Iranian intermediate EFL learners in terms of gender?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following research hypotheses were tested in this study:

- 1) Big Blue Button Software does not have any significant impact on improving listening comprehension among Iranian intermediate EFL learners.
- 2) Big Blue Button Software does not have any significant impact on improving listening comprehension among Iranian intermediate EFL learners in terms of gender.

## **Literature Review**

### **Definition of Listening Skill**

According to Anderson and Lynch (1988), arguing what is successful listening, “understanding is not something that happens because of what a speaker says: the listener has a crucial part to play in the process, by activating various types of knowledge, and by applying what he knows to what he hears and trying to understand what the speaker means” (p. 6). Mendelson (2000) defined listening comprehension as the ability to understand the spoken language of native speakers. Mendelsohn (2000) pointed out that, in listening to spoken language, the ability to decipher the speaker’s intention is required of a competent listener, in addition to other abilities such as processing the linguistic forms like speech speed and fillers, coping with listening in an interaction,

understanding the whole message contained in the discourse, comprehending the message without understanding every word, and recognizing different genres.

### **Employment of Virtual Classes for Online Language Learning**

Virtual classrooms enable language students to contact native speakers of any preferred language, which helps students develop their language production skills (speaking and writing). The most important advantages of virtual classrooms are their flexibility, interaction, and assistance for those with restricted mobility or lack of resources (Kobzar & Kuriata, 2015). These points will be explained in detail in the following parts.

Virtual classrooms have advantages for students with limited mobility or limited access to educational resources (Kobzar & Kuriata, 2015). The classrooms allow for the students to have more talk time than they would receive in typical traditional classroom settings due to the differences in class sizes. In a consort with the advantage of bringing the lesson to the student, evidence recommends that Online Language learning (OLL) enhances student motivation (Kobzar & Kuriata, 2015). The use of technology at home helps to encourage and improve EFL students' learning and acquisition of English vocabulary (Al-Jarf, 2007). Yen et al. (2015) discovered that technology develops speaking and writing skills, where many environmental and cultural components restrain language learning, such as the nonexistence of interactive speaking environments, concentration on test scores, and foreign language anxiety. They also noted the participation levels of students in computer-assisted discussions were greater than in face-to-face discussions. Golonka et al. (2014) reviewed 350 articles on online language learning and technology. They found evidence that, with online chat, the learners' language production and complexity increase and the technology enhances the learners' output and interaction. These findings suggest that learning through online discussions with an instructor would increase performance at a faster rate over time.

Yadav (2016) discusses the advantages and disadvantages of using computers and the Internet in education and discusses the role of teachers in Internet education. Yadav states how the use of the Internet and web lead to significant changes in educational models and in communication tools that are adapting easily with learning methods. He mentions that virtual classes are a new term of E-learning, where the students will be present with their professor and fellow learners in a classroom via the Internet. He also states that the availability of different



communication materials between teachers and students in virtual classes considers as a beneficial role is of synchronous online classes. It plays an imperative role in preserving interaction. Moreover, he points out the interaction capability of the synchronous virtual classroom and the importance of learner-learner, learner-instructor, learner-content, and learner-interface interaction within the virtual classroom. He also concludes with the need for training and technical problems consider as disadvantages of virtual classes.

Correspondingly, Danesh et al. (2015) emphasize the role of technology in interaction and communication as interacts with distance education. They maintain that a lot of universities in higher education are increasing their online course. They focus on technology and media as their relation in collaboration, interaction, and communication. They also mention that the increasing interest in distance education attributes to two significant factors. These factors are the progress of computing and telecommunication technologies, the second is the change in the demographic population of college students. They also assert that communication plays a significant role in the success of distance education and is a collective activity. Effective communication is possible when participants share similar ground relates such as mutual knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions in a conversation.

### **Big Blue Button: A Platform for Online Classes**

It is an open source web conferencing system specifically designed for virtual learning environment. It was developed at Carleton University, Canada (Roesler et al., 2012). The first version of Big Blue Button (BBB) was released in 2007 to enable students from remote areas to take part in web conferencing system. Throughout the year 2008 Big Blue Button 0.32 was introduced with aspects such as chat, video, slides, and voice. Subsequently, the version 0.62 with additional feature desktop sharing and build in VoIP in the year 2009. Next version 0.7 of Big Blue Button was released during the year 2010 with built-in whiteboard (Ravisekaran & Ramakrishnan, 2015).

By November 2011, Big Blue Button 0.8-beta-1 was developed with audio setting dialogue. The additional ability to record and playback the slides, audio features and interaction facility with lecturer were incorporated in 0.8 version during the year 2012. Subsequent, version 0.81 (2013) was successfully developed by incorporating the facility of interview by VoIP conference. The

2014 release of Big Blue Button support Web RTC audio (Dixon, 2020). The most important advantage of this release is reducing the time delay between users who are geographically at far apart and consequently guaranteeing the video and audio perfect synchronization.

### **Review of the Previous Empirical Studies**

In this section, the previous empirical studies done so far on the area that was investigated in this study are reviewed and analyzed:

Fauzi and Angkasawati (2019) conducted a study to figure out the effect of employing listening logs using WhatsApp on the listening comprehension of EFL students. The experiment was done by participating 40 EFL students and held for three weeks which practiced four facets of listening comprehension: (1) detecting main ideas or main gist, (2) recognizing supporting details, (3) categorizing moods of the message, and (4) evolving new vocabularies. The researchers concluded that the practice of listening through listening logs in WhatsApp gives noteworthy enhancement in listening comprehension to EFL learners.

Rifiyanti (2020) tried to detect English learners' ideas about online English learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data were collected through questionnaires by instruments consisting of learners' perceptions about the effectiveness of learning English online, the accessibility of the internet during English online learning, the technical performance of lecturers to teach English online, and the level of difficulty of language skills to learn online. The study indicated that based on the students' perceptions, online learning especially for English classes is an efficient way during the pandemic. They also believed that the listening section is the most difficult skill to learn in online English class.

Susilowati (2020) conducted a study to discover the challenges in conducting online learning in listening classes at the university level. The first challenge was related to selecting the appropriate technological devices, systems, and applications operated throughout the class. The second challenge was the packaging of material delivered so that it will be simplified but not to lessen the quality level of the material. The third challenge was the application of operational methods and strategies suited to online learning in listening classes.

Sulistio (2021) studied EFL learners' attitudes towards online listening classes during the pandemic Covid-19. The participants of the study were 67 EFL learners who were selected through random sampling. The data of the study were collected using a questionnaire. The analysis of the

obtained results from the questionnaire indicated that 40 out of 67 students had positive attitudes towards online listening classes during the pandemic Covid-19.

Rui'yah (2021) investigated EFL learners' perceptions of online listening classes. The data were collected using a questionnaire that was administered to 10 English learners. The analysis of the data revealed that online learning activities in listening classes focus on revealing the learner with authentic material and encourage students to practice the listening skills independently especially IELTS by providing the students with suitable and sufficient material. It also found that learning platforms are applied effectively. The study also indicated that the participants believed that online listening classes were enjoyable, practical, and flexible.

Cavus and Sekyere-Asiedu (2021) utilized a comparative research method to compare features of seven online video conference platforms; Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, GoToMeeting, Cisco WebEx Meetings, Zoom Meetings, ClickMeetings and Big Blue Button. The comparative results revealed that each online video conference platform has different beneficial features for teachers and students. Teachers should analyze carefully all features of each platform, to select an appropriate platform for student needs.

The review of the previous literature indicated that listening comprehension is a fundamental skill of English which is necessary for other language skills like vocabulary, speaking, and communication. However, this skill has been almost ignored and researchers have not considered it meticulously. It was also indicated that education has shifted from physical classes to online classes because of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Platforms are important components of holding an effective online class in general and English classes in specific. Platforms create an environment for English students to communicate with each other in a virtual setting. However, the usefulness and efficiency of these tools in online classes, particularly for listening comprehension in EFL context, have not been investigated so far. Therefore, the researcher conducted this study to bridge this gap.

## Method

### Participants

The participants of the study were 40 Iranian EFL learners whose level of proficiency was intermediate. The participants were an equal number of male and female EFL learners who were

studying English in online classes at Koosha Language Institute in Isfahan. The participants' age ranged between 16 and 28 years old and their first language was Persian. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study by the manager of the institute and they agreed to take part in it. The placement test which, was Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT), was given to all learners in the institute and the ones who were recognized as intermediate learners were selected as the participants. Then, the participants were divided into two equal classes based on the participants' gender.

### **Design of the Study**

This study was quasi-experimental because the participants were selected only from one group of English learners who were intermediate English students. In addition, the study employed a pre-test post-test design to collect the required data. The study had an independent variable and a dependent variable. The independent variable of the study was the Big Blue Button platform and the dependent variable was the participants' listening comprehension.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrumentation of the study consisted of the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT), the listening test, and Big Blue Button which are described in this part of the chapter.

### ***Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT)***

Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) version 2 is a standard test of language proficiency that was given to the participants before conducting the study to select a homogeneous group of participants. The test consists of two parts; part one contains 40 questions: testing situations (five questions), cloze passages, testing prepositions, grammar, pronouns, and vocabulary (15 questions), and completion questions (20 questions). The second part contains 20 questions; 10 questions on cloze passages and 10 questions of completion type questions. All questions are multiple-choice items. This test is scored out of 60 and each test taker whose score is between 30 and 39 is regarded as a lower intermediate English learner.

### ***Listening Test***

The listening test was selected from *Developing Tactics for Listening* (Richards & Trew, 2011) because this book was not taught in the institute and the participants were not familiar with it. *Tactics for Listening Third Edition* is an activity-rich listening course with proven success in building skills in listening and conversation. Now with *Tactics for Testing*, it provides plenty of practice in testing and exam techniques. The result is confident listeners - and exam success. This book has three levels of basic, developing, and expanding where the developing level is suitable for intermediate students (Richards & Trew, 2011). The test consisted of 20 multiple-choice questions without deductive scores. The participants' scores could range between 0 and 20. The reliability of the test was evaluated via KR-21 formula ( $r = .83$ ) whose results showed that the test had high reliability. To make sure that the test was valid, two experts in the field of TEFL who had Ph.D. degrees were consulted and they confirmed its validity. The test was given to the participants twice during the study. First, it was given to the participants before the treatment as the pre-test. Second, it was given to the participants after the treatment as the post-test.

### ***Big Blue Button Software***

Big Blue Button is an international teaching platform. It was developed in a school, not in a boardroom making it the only virtual classroom created from the beginning, only for teachers. It is available in 65 languages and teachers around the world have contributed to its design. In a consort with a global network of developers and companies providing commercial support, Big Blue Button is uninterruptedly growing to satisfy the new real-world needs of teachers in all places.

### **Procedure**

In order to select suitable participants for the study, the placement test was given to the participants and the ones whose level of proficiency was intermediate were selected. Then, the participants were put into two equal classes based on their gender. Next, the pre-test was given to the participants to make sure female and male participants were at the same level of listening comprehension skills. The participants enrolled in a 17-session online English course. In this course, the textbook was *Touchstone 2* and the classes were held by Big Blue Button as the

platform. The first half of the book was taught to the participants. During the course, the participants learned all language skills of vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, and writing based on the textbook. The participants were continuously evaluated by the researcher to figure out their improvement in English. After completing the course, the post-test was given to the participants to compare their listening comprehension before the treatment and to compare female and male participants with each other. The results of the tests were gathered to be analyzed statistically.

### Data Analysis

The obtained data of the study were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 24. To analyze the data, both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed by the researcher. The descriptive statistics were frequency, mean, and standard deviation. The inferential statistics were paired-samples *t*-test which was run to compare the results of the pre-test and post-test with each other and independent-sample *t*-test which was run to compare female and male participants with each other.

## Results

### Results of the Normality Tests

The normality tests were run to assess the assumption of the normality of the data. The results are shown in the table below.

**Table 1**

*Tests of normality*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	<i>Df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	Statistic	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
OQPT	.122	40	.139	.958	40	.147
Pretest	.074	40	.200	.976	40	.532
Posttest	.072	40	.200	.984	40	.848

Since the size of the sample in this study was small, the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test were considered for assessing the assumption of normality. The results of the test indicate that the distribution of data for OQPT ( $p = .147$ ), pretest ( $p = .532$ ), and posttest ( $p = .848$ ) were normal

because all  $p$  values were greater than .05. Therefore, parametric tests were suitable for analyzing the findings of the study.

### Results of OQPT

The OQPT was given to the participants to measure their general English knowledge and to make sure there was not a significant difference between male and female learners related to this issue.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive statistics of OQPT*

	Participants	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
OQPT	Female	20	34.77	1.718	.384
	Male	20	34.39	1.833	.410

Table 4.2 shows the descriptive statistics of the female participants ( $M = 34.77$ ,  $SD = 1.72$ ) and male participants ( $M = 34.39$ ,  $SD = 1.83$ ) on OQPT. The female participants performed better on this test but this cannot be significant. To be sure about it, the independent-samples  $t$ -test was run.

**Table 3**

*Results of the independent-samples  $t$ -test for OQPT*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		$t$ -test for Equality of Means							
	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	<i>Std. Error Difference</i>	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
OQPT	Equal variances assumed	.234	.631	.685	38	.498	.385	.562	-.753	1.522
	Equal variances not assumed			.685	37.841	.498	.385	.562	-.753	1.522

Based on the results of the independent samples *t*-test ( $t(38) = .69, p = .498$ ), there was not a significant difference between male and female participants on OQPT. Therefore, all participants were intermediate EFL learners.

### Addressing the First Research Question

The first research question was posed to investigate the effects of Big Blue Button on improving listening comprehension among Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

**Table 4**

*Descriptive statistics of the female participants*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	11.31	20	2.461	.550
	Posttest	16.03	20	1.928	.431

Table 4.4 shows the descriptive statistics of the female participants on the pretest ( $M = 11.31, SD = 2.46$ ) and on the posttest ( $M = 16.03, SD = 1.93$ ). It is obvious that the participants performed better on the posttest. The paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to measure this issue statistically.

**Table 4**

*Results of the paired-samples *t*-test for the female participants*

Pair		Paired Differences					<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
1	Pretest - Posttest	-4.726	3.506	.784	-6.367	-3.085	-6.029	19	.000

Table 4.5 indicates that the results of the paired-samples *t*-test were statistically significant ( $t(19) = -6.03, p < .001$ ) because the *p* value was lower than .05. Therefore, BigBlueButton had a significant effect on improving the female learners' listening comprehension. The results are also shown in the figure below.



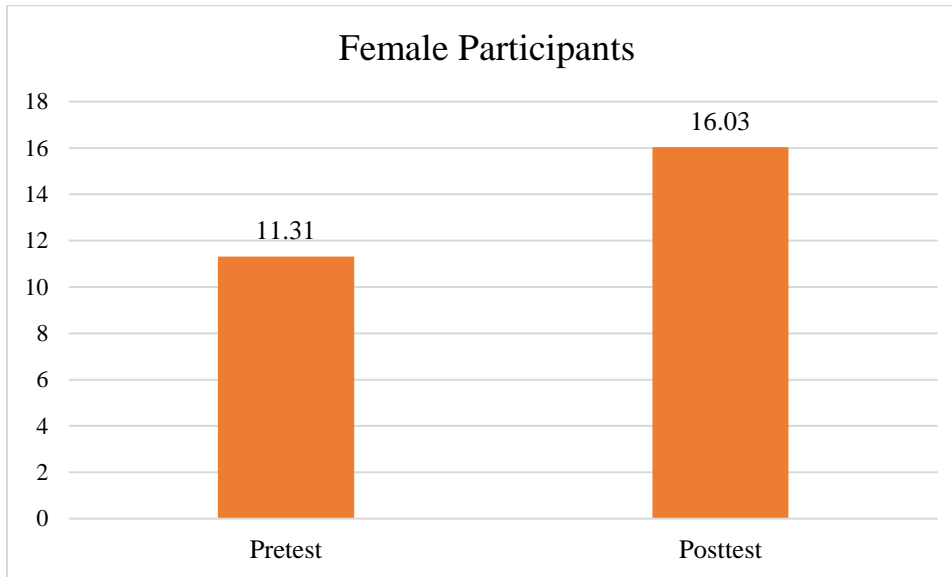
**Figure 1***Mean scores of female participants on the tests*

Figure 4.1 shows that the female participants significantly outperformed on the posttest.

**Table 5***Descriptive statistics of the male participants*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	12.57	20	2.552	.571
	Posttest	16.09	20	2.321	.519

Table 4.6 indicates the descriptive statistics of the male participants on the pretest ( $M = 12.57$ ,  $SD = 2.55$ ) and on the posttest ( $M = 16.09$ ,  $SD = 2.32$ ). It is noticeable that the participants outperformed on the posttest. The paired-samples  $t$ -test was conducted to measure this issue statistically.

**Table 6***Results of the paired-samples  $t$ -test for the male participants*

Paired Differences							
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		$t$	$df$	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Lower	Upper			

Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-3.522	3.464	.775	-6.143	-1.901	-4.547	19	.000
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Table 4.7 indicates that the results of the paired-samples *t*-test were statistically significant ( $t(19) = -4.55, p < .001$ ) because the *p* value was lower than .05. Therefore, BigBlueButton had a significant effect on improving the male learners' listening comprehension. The results are also illustrated in the figure below.

## Figure 2

*Mean scores of male participants on the tests*

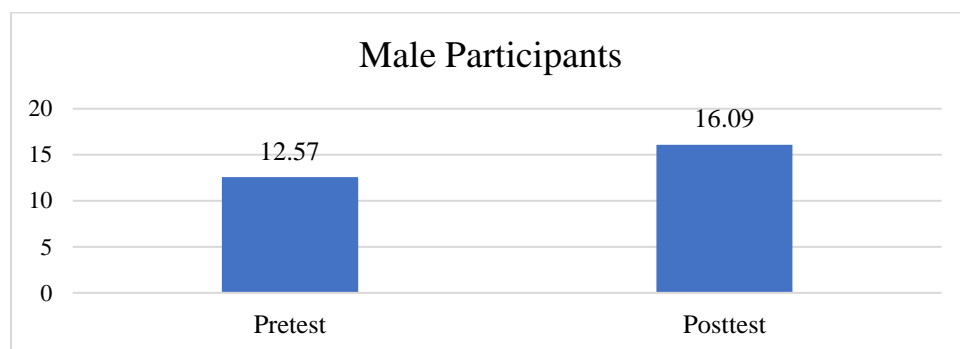


Figure 4.2 shows that the male participants significantly performed better on the posttest.

## Addressing the Second Research Question

The first research question was posed to investigate the possible difference between the effects of Big Blue Button on improving listening comprehension among Iranian intermediate female and male EFL learners.

## Table 7

*Descriptive statistics of the posttest*

	Participants	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
Posttest	Female	20	16.03	1.928	.431
	Male	20	16.09	2.321	.519

Table 4.8 shows the descriptive statistics of the female participants ( $M = 16.03, SD = 1.93$ ) and male participants ( $M = 16.09, SD = 2.32$ ) on the posttest. The table shows that the male

participants performed better on this test but this better performance was not considerable. To evaluate this issue statistically, the independent-samples *t*-test was conducted.

**Table 8**

*Results of the independent-samples t-test for the posttest*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Means							
	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	<i>Std. Error</i> Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
Posttest	Equal variances assumed	2.443	.126	-.090	38	.928	-.061	.675	-1.427	1.305
	Equal variances not assumed			-.090	36.767	.928	-.061	.675	-1.428	1.306

Based on the results of the independent samples *t*-test ( $t(38) = -.09, p = .928$ ), there was not a significant difference between male and female participants on the posttest. Therefore, the software had a similar effect on both female and male participants.

The results of the study revealed that Big Blue Button had a significant effect on improving listening comprehension among Iranian male and female intermediate EFL learners and gender did not play a significant role. The findings of the study will be discussed in the following part.

### Discussion

The findings of the study are discussed based on the research hypotheses. The research hypotheses were: a) Big Blue Button Software does not have any significant impact on improving listening comprehension among Iranian intermediate EFL learners, b) Big Blue Button Software does not have any significant impact on improving listening comprehension among Iranian intermediate EFL learners in terms of gender. Because the two research hypotheses are completely related to each other and they cannot be separated, they are discussed together in one part. The findings of

the study indicated that Big Blue Button had a significant effect on improving listening comprehension among Iranian male and female intermediate EFL learners and gender did not play a significant role. Therefore, the first research hypothesis was rejected, but the second research hypothesis was not rejected.

Online teaching is a new era in the field of education and consequently, the academic studies that have been conducted on this issue are not considerable in comparison with other issues. However, there are some similarities between the findings of this study and the findings of the previous studies in the literature. The results of this study are in line with the results of the study conducted by Fauzi and Angkasawati (2019) who investigated the effect of employing listening logs using WhatsApp on the listening comprehension of EFL students. The researchers claimed that the practice of listening through listening logs in WhatsApp gives noteworthy enhancement in listening comprehension to EFL learners.

In both of these studies, the results indicated that the implementation of some additional or supplementary applications like WhatsApp or Big Blue Button has positive effects on English learners' listening comprehension. It can be because of the possibilities that these applications provide for teachers and learners to teach and practice this skill. Moreover, Big Blue Button makes the atmosphere of the online class more interesting and provides learners with opportunities to practice with each other.

In another study, Marleni et al. (2021) investigated the effects of using video as media on the students' listening comprehension in an online class. The researchers concluded that video in teaching listening comprehension in an online class is an influential media and significantly improves learners' listening comprehension. Similar to the previous study, this study also showed that using additional material in online classes has a positive effect on enhancing the learners' listening comprehension. Therefore, the findings of the present study are a confirmation of the results of the previous studies.

In general, it can be mentioned that the employment of platforms like Big Blue Button can be a great help for improving English learners' listening comprehension. Therefore, it is recommended that English teachers hold their online classes using this platform or other useful or suitable platforms.

### Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of the Big Blue Button platform on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension and compare female and male learners based on this issue. From the results of the study, the researcher concluded that Big Blue Button Software has a significant effect on improving listening comprehension among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. Moreover, there is not a significant difference between female and male learners related to the effects of this software on their listening comprehension.

As previously mentioned, Big Blue Button makes the online class more interesting to learners because of its features. These features consist of providing the teacher with the possibility of sharing different things such as PDFs, pages of books, and various slides. It also has a board that provides enough room for the teacher to write necessary notes on it. Unfortunately, the teacher cannot show video files using this platform, but there are not any problems for playing audio files with high quality which is very useful for teaching the listening comprehension skill. Moreover, this platform enables the teacher to create breakout rooms where students can do pair-work or group work which is very useful for practicing and improving skills like listening comprehension. Furthermore, the teacher has the possibility to observe and control these rooms to guide the students and give them feedback.

In online classes, applying effective technological devices, applications or other kinds of technology should consider the cost spent too. It becomes a challenge for teachers, lecturers, and educational practitioners to consider consciously which technological devices which is most appropriate to be used. In addition, choosing and using a suitable platform for holding an online class is a challenging area for either teachers or institutes and it is of utmost importance. Big Blue Button is a platform that is designed for holding online classes and can provide a suitable and interesting atmosphere for both teachers and learners. Moreover, not having suitable interaction between the teacher and the students or between the students with one another is a big problem in online classes. Big Blue Button can solve this problem by providing the possibility of mutual interaction between the teachers and students or between the students with each other.

Therefore, it is recommended that teachers use this software for holding their online classes to have a more fruitful class. To have the proper usage of this software teachers need to have suitable knowledge of computers and obtain the proper skill of using this software.

### **Implications of the Study**

The findings of this study provide useful implications for English teachers and learners and language institutes. Improving EFL learners' listening comprehension has always been a challenging area for teachers. This issue is even more problematic in online classes. The results of this study can help English teachers become familiar with the features of Big Blue Button and its usefulness for holding online classes. Therefore, they can improve the quality of their online classes and their teaching in these classes and enable their students to improve their language knowledge and their listening comprehension. Moreover, EFL learners can benefit from the results of the study. If language teachers hold their online classes through Big Blue Button, English learners will be able to learn more effectively in these classes and consequently get better results. Furthermore, language institutes can benefit from the results of the study to use this platform for more effective and more interesting online classes. Finally, this study enriches the literature in the areas of online teaching and listening comprehension.

### **Limitations of the Study**

During the process of conducting this study, the researcher faced some limitations which could affect the results of the study. the first and foremost limitation of the study is the nonexistence of a study in the literature that investigated the use of platforms in online classes. Therefore, the researcher could not compare the results of this study with similar studies in the past to get a more comprehensive understating of the results of the study. The second limitation of the study was related to the small sample of the study which can provide problems for the generalizability of the results. By increasing the number of participants in the study, this problem increases. The third limitation of the study was related to the low speed of the Internet and constant disconnections of the internet that the researcher and the participants during the classes. The fourth limitation of the study was related to participating only intermediate learners in the study.

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## Linguistic and Cultural Differences Between English and Arabic Languages and their Impact on the Translation Process

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Translation, Arabic and English Languages, Culture and Cultural differences, stylistics, terminology

### Abstract

Translation is a complex process that involves transferring meaning from one language to another while considering the linguistic and cultural nuances of both source and target languages. This study examines the linguistic and cultural differences between English and Arabic and their profound influence on the translation process. The study explores various aspects of these differences, including grammar, vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, cultural references, religious and legal terminology, as well as worldview and cultural norms. English and Arabic exhibit distinct grammatical structures and rules, requiring translators to navigate different sentence constructions and word orders. Moreover, both languages possess unique vocabularies and idiomatic expressions that demand translators to have a deep understanding of cultural context to find suitable equivalents or convey meaning effectively. Cultural references play a vital role in translation, as Arabic and English-speaking cultures have diverse historical, religious, and social backgrounds. Translators must possess cultural sensitivity and knowledge to ensure accurate conveyance of references and allusions. Additionally, religious and legal terminology poses a challenge in translation, as Arabic has a rich vocabulary specific to Islamic terms and legal terminology. The study employs textual analysis as a research method to examine, interpret and delve into the content, themes, and underlying patterns within the selected texts. Understanding the impact of linguistic and cultural disparities between English and Arabic languages is crucial for producing accurate and meaningful translations.

### تفاوت‌های زبانی و فرهنگی بین زبان‌های انگلیسی و عربی و تأثیر آنها بر فرآیند ترجمه

ترجمه فرآیند پیچیده‌ای است که شامل انتقال معنا از زبانی به زبان دیگر و در نظر گرفتن تفاوت‌های زبانی و فرهنگی هر دو زبان مبدأ و مقصد است. این مطالعه به بررسی تفاوت‌های زبانی و فرهنگی بین انگلیسی و عربی و تأثیر عمیق آنها بر فرآیند ترجمه می‌پردازد. این مطالعه جنبه‌های مختلف این تفاوت‌ها، از جمله دستور زبان، واژگان، عبارات اصطلاحی، ارجاعات فرهنگی، اصطلاحات مذهبی و حقوقی، و همچنین جهان بینی و هنجارهای فرهنگی را بررسی می‌کند. انگلیسی و عربی ساختارها و قواعد گرامری متمایزی را نشان می‌دهند و مترجمان را ملزم می‌کند تا ساختارهای جملات و ترتیب کلمات مختلف را دنبال کنند. علاوه بر این، هر دو زبان دارای واژگان و عبارات اصطلاحی منحصر به فردی هستند که از مترجمان می‌خواهد که درک عمیقی از بافت فرهنگی برای یافتن معادل‌های مناسب یا انتقال مؤثر معنا داشته باشند. ارجاعات فرهنگی نقش حیاتی در ترجمه دارند، زیرا فرهنگ‌های عربی و انگلیسی زبان دارای پیشینه تاریخی، مذهبی و اجتماعی متنوعی هستند. مترجمان باید از حساسیت و دانش فرهنگی برخوردار باشند تا از انتقال دقیق مراجع و اشارات اطمینان حاصل کنند. علاوه بر این، اصطلاحات دینی و حقوقی در ترجمه چالشی ایجاد می‌کند، زیرا عربی دارای واژگان غنی ویژه اصطلاحات اسلامی و اصطلاحات حقوقی است. این مطالعه از تحلیل متنی به عنوان یک روش تحقیق برای بررسی، تفسیر و کشف در محتوا، مضامین و الگوهای زیربنایی متون انتخاب شده استفاده می‌کند. درک تأثیر تفاوت‌های زبانی و فرهنگی بین زبان‌های انگلیسی و عربی برای تولید ترجمه‌های دقیق و معنادار بسیار مهم است.

**کلمات کلیدی:** ترجمه، زبان‌های عربی و انگلیسی، فرهنگ و تفاوت‌های فرهنگی، سبک‌شناسی، اصطلاح‌شناسی

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## Introduction

The linguistic and cultural differences between the English and Arabic languages have a significant impact on the translation process. These differences stem from variations in grammar, vocabulary, syntax, idiomatic expressions, cultural norms, and worldview, (Ali & Al-Rushaidi, 2017). Understanding and navigating these disparities is essential for accurate and effective translation. English and Arabic have different sentence structures and grammatical rules. Arabic is a Semitic language with a complex system of roots, patterns, and declensions, while English relies on subject-verb-object word order, (Akki & Larouz, 2021). Translators must be skilled in restructuring sentences and adjusting word order to convey the intended meaning accurately. Translators must possess a deep understanding of both languages and cultures, along with strong interpretative and communicative skills. By recognizing these differences and employing appropriate translation strategies, the challenges posed by linguistic and cultural gaps can be overcome, leading to successful cross-cultural communication, (Al Madhoun & Elyan, 2020). Both languages possess unique vocabularies and idiomatic expressions that may not have direct equivalents. Translators must have a deep understanding of cultural nuances and context to find suitable equivalents or convey the intended meaning using alternative phrases or explanations. Arabic and English-speaking cultures have distinct historical, religious, and social backgrounds, resulting in divergent cultural references and symbols. Translators need to be culturally sensitive and knowledgeable to ensure that the target audience comprehends references and allusions correctly, (Al Madhoun & Elyan, 2020). Translators must be aware of these differences to effectively convey messages and avoid misinterpretation or offense. Literal word-for-word translations often fail to capture intended meaning or cultural nuances, emphasizing the need for translators to make informed choices, considering both linguistic and cultural aspects, (Almijrab, 2020). Arabic has a rich vocabulary related to Islamic terms and legal terminology. Translating religious texts or legal documents requires expertise in Islamic and legal systems to ensure accurate and culturally appropriate translations.

Arabic and English cultures have different worldviews and cultural norms, which affect language usage, (Andrist, et. al, 2015). Translators must be aware of these differences to convey messages effectively and avoid misinterpretation or offense. Adequate expertise in these domains is necessary to guarantee accurate and culturally appropriate translations, (Al-Masri, 2009).

Furthermore, differences in worldview and cultural norms affect language usage, resulting in distinct approaches to communication.

The impact of these linguistic and cultural disparities is that literal word-for-word translations often fail to capture the intended meaning or convey the cultural nuances accurately. Translators must make careful choices, considering both linguistic and cultural aspects, to produce translations that are faithful to the source material while being accessible and meaningful to the target audience, (Santos & Suleiman, 1993). This requires a deep understanding of both languages and cultures, as well as strong interpretative and communicative skills.

### **Methodology**

Textual analysis is a research method used to examine and interpret written or spoken texts to understand their meaning, themes, and underlying patterns. It involves a systematic and rigorous examination of textual data, such as books, articles, interviews, speeches, social media posts, or any form of written or verbal communication. Textual analysis can be applied across various disciplines, including literature, linguistics, communication studies, media studies, sociology, and anthropology, (Krippendorff, 2018). Textual analysis allows researchers to uncover insights into the language, rhetoric, and ideologies embedded within texts. By critically examining the textual data, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of social, cultural, political, or historical phenomena and generate valuable insights for further research or practical applications. By applying systematic and rigorous analysis techniques, the study aims to uncover meaningful insights, identify recurring patterns or themes, and interpret the significance of the textual data.

### **Stylistics**

The central concept in the field of stylistics is style. Style can be observed in various domains such as architecture, painting, clothing, behavior, and work, among others. In its broadest sense, style refers to a distinct characteristic of human activities that emerges from deliberate choices made within established norms, determining a particular mode or manner of engagement. Style serves as an indicator of the individual's social role, their affiliation with or aspiration towards a specific social group, and their unique personal traits and psychological condition. Variations in language style can be seen as manifestations of various factors, including the context in which

communication takes place, the dynamics between the author and reader, and the backgrounds of the individuals involved. Psycholinguists, such as Semino and Culpeper (2002) and Enkvist (1985), have extensively examined the impact of these factors. Additionally, linguistic style encompasses the prescriptive grammar that aligns with the aesthetic qualities of a text, a topic investigated by computational linguists like Lakoff (1979) and Thurmair (1990). In this paper, our focus is specifically on the study of stylistics within the realm of translation. Stylistically expressive elements in a text can be recognized at the level of individual words (lexical), through the organization of sentences (syntactic), and by examining the characteristics of the underlying meaning being conveyed (semantic), (Verma & Srinivasan, 2019).

Stylistics, a field of study within linguistics, explores the complete range of expressive resources found in a particular language. It is a relatively recent discipline in linguistics. The term "stylistics" was initially recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1882, defining it as the study of stylistic features and the science of literary style. Nevertheless, the earliest contemplations on style can be traced back to ancient times. Ancient rhetoric and poetics, which are seen as precursors to stylistics, regarded style as a distinct mode of expression, the appropriate embellishment of thought, (Zhukovska, 2010).

### **Arabic Stylistics**

Arabic stylistics explores the unique features and characteristics of the Arabic language. It investigates elements such as morphology, syntax, semantics, phonetics, and phonology to analyze how Arabic texts are structured and how meaning is conveyed, (Abdul-Raof, 2001). Some key aspects of Arabic stylistics include: Morphology: The study of word formation and inflection in Arabic, including the use of roots, prefixes, and suffixes to create words. Syntax: Examining the sentence structure, word order, and grammatical relationships within Arabic sentences. Semantics: Analyzing the meaning and interpretation of words, phrases, and sentences in Arabic, including aspects such as connotations, figurative language, and rhetorical devices. Phonetics and Phonology: Investigating the sounds and pronunciation of Arabic, including the study of phonemes, intonation patterns, and accents. Arabic and English stylistics refer to the study of the linguistic and stylistic features specific to the Arabic and English languages, respectively. Stylistics examines how language is used in different contexts, focusing on the choices made by speakers or writers to convey meaning, create effects, and engage with their audience. Transferring



Arabic stylistics into English can pose several challenges due to the inherent differences between the two languages, (Mohammed Farghal, 2022). Here are some key challenges:

**Linguistic Structure:** Arabic and English have distinct linguistic structures. Arabic is a Semitic language with a different word order, complex morphology, and a rich system of root-based word formation, (Mehawesh, 2013). Transferring these unique features into English can be challenging as English follows a different word order and has a simpler morphology.

**Cultural Context:** Arabic stylistics often relies on cultural references, historical contexts, and religious allusions that may not have direct equivalents in English, (Dweik & Khaleel, 2017). Transferring these cultural nuances can be difficult, as they may require explanations or adaptations to be effectively conveyed to an English-speaking audience.

**Idiomatic Expressions and Proverbs:** Arabic is rich in idiomatic expressions and proverbs that carry cultural and contextual meanings. Translating these expressions into English while preserving their intended sense and impact can be a complex task, as direct translation may result in loss of meaning or sound unnatural in English, (Mustafa, 2010).

**Figurative Language:** Arabic employs various types of figurative language, including metaphor, simile, hyperbole, and metonymy. Transferring these figurative devices into English requires careful consideration, as literal translation may not capture the intended effect or convey the same cultural connotations.

**Phonetics and Sounds:** Arabic and English have different phonetic systems, with Arabic including unique phonemes and sounds that do not exist in English. Transferring the phonetic aspects of Arabic stylistics, such as rhymes, rhythms, and sound patterns, into English can be challenging, as the two languages have different phonetic constraints and prosodic patterns, (Nofal, 2012).

**Writing Systems:** Arabic uses a different script and directionality (right-to-left) compared to English (left-to-right). Translating Arabic texts into English requires not only transferring the linguistic aspects but also adapting the writing system and directionality, which can impact the visual and aesthetic aspects of the stylistic elements. To overcome these challenges, translators and researchers need to employ strategies such as adaptation, cultural explanation, creative rendering, and finding equivalent stylistic devices or expressions in English that effectively convey the intended meaning, tone, and impact of the original Arabic texts, (Baker, 2018). It often requires a deep understanding of both languages, cultures, and stylistic conventions to successfully transfer Arabic stylistics into English.

### English Stylistics

English stylistics focuses on the linguistic and stylistic features of the English language. It examines how English texts are constructed and how meaning is conveyed through various linguistic choices. Key areas of English stylistics include: **Lexical Choices:** Analyzing the selection and use of specific words, idioms, metaphors, and other figures of speech in English texts. **Sentence Structure:** Examining the syntax and sentence patterns used in English, including variations in word order, sentence length, and types of clauses. **Register and Discourse Analysis:** Investigating the variations in language use based on different contexts, such as formal, informal, academic, or technical writing. **Rhetoric and Stylistic Devices:** Exploring rhetorical devices, such as repetition, alliteration, irony, and parallelism, employed to create emphasis, persuasion, or aesthetic effects in English texts. The study of Arabic and English stylistics provides valuable insights into the unique linguistic features, stylistic choices, and cultural nuances of these languages. It enables scholars and researchers to analyze and appreciate the richness and diversity of expression within Arabic and English texts, contributing to fields such as literature, linguistics, translation studies, and language teaching.

### Discussion

The translator encounters a challenge when dealing with certain texts, namely, how to interpret words that have no equivalent in a particular culture or setting, (Alwazna, 2014). For instance, European culture has terms like "boyfriend" and "girlfriend" that are nonexistent in Arab culture. Similarly, foods like porridge and attire like dinner jackets are not familiar in Arab culture. Conversely, within the Arab setting, there are certain foods like mallow and licorice, and clothing items such as turbans and robes, as well as legal and social procedures like khula, which are not found in foreign environments. Additionally, the Islamic faith utilizes terms like "iddah" and "mohalil" that have no direct translation in English.

The issue of untranslatability arises due to the dissimilarities between the source language and the language of translation. To overcome this hurdle, a common approach is to employ transliteration, which involves rendering the word in the target language based on its pronunciation in the source language, (Awwad, 1990). For example, words like "iddat" and "mohalel" are transliterated and explained within parentheses, such as: Iddat (the period following a divorce or the death of a spouse during which a woman is prohibited from remarriage according to Islamic

law). Nevertheless, it has become apparent that this method is not always effective, as it demands that the translator possess an in-depth understanding of the cultural context associated with the source language. The translation may end up being wholly or partly inaccurate, especially when the text deals with topics that are beyond the translator's area of expertise, (Dweik & Khaleel, 2017b).

اِقْتَرَبَتِ السَّاعَةُ وَاَنْشَقَّ الْقَمَرُ (سورة القمر - الآية " ١ ")

**Literally translated as:**

“The Hour has drawn near and the moon has been cleft asunder”

اَتَىٰ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوْهُ (سورة النحل - الآية " ١ ")

**Literally translated as:**

“The event ordained by Allah has come to pass, so seek not to hasten it”

Due to the absence of this rhetorical color in the English language, (Deeb, 2005) when translating such verses, the translator must choose a word that indicates the occurrence of the event in the future and use a word of emphasis such as "certainly." Therefore, the translation of the first verse becomes as follows:

“The Hour will certainly draw near and the moon will cleave asunder”

“The event ordained by Allah will certainly come to pass, so seek not to hasten it”

The Arabic language has a practice of emphasizing the masculine gender over the feminine, to the extent that it is sometimes referred to as the "he-language". However, this approach may not be acceptable in English, (Assaqaf, 2019) where the feminist movement has prompted the development of various techniques to address the issue of gender discrimination, such as using gender-neutral pronouns like "he/she" or "his/her", or replacing gender-specific terms like "postman" with "postal worker". As a result, the translator must consider these factors when translating to ensure that their work is in line with contemporary English language trends, (Dawood, 2004).

There are additional linguistic differences between Arabic and English, including the use of the singular form to refer to the plural in English, for instance:

Poultry disease control

Student Affairs

This practice does not exist in Arabic, where the singular and plural forms are distinct. Accordingly, the accurate translations of the aforementioned examples in Arabic would be:

"Poultry diseases control" instead of "poultry disease"

"Students affairs" instead of "student affairs"

English uses the pronoun "it," which has no equivalent in Arabic. When translating, "it" is either rendered in an impersonal form or replaced by the name of the object. For instance,

يعتقد أن                    It is believed

من المشكوك فيه        It is doubted

It is important to avoid ambiguity in interpreting the meaning of a sentence, particularly with regard to the following differences between Arabic and English:

English employs the definite article "the" with certain nouns, such as "The Nile" or "The Alps," but not with words that denote sciences, colors, and games, such as "physics," "red," and "tennis."

Conversely, Arabic uses the definite article with all such nouns, without any distinction.

In English, the subject's gender is usually indicated by the pronoun in a sentence, such as:

The doctor lost his hat

The doctor lost her hat

However, when the pronoun referring to the subject is absent, as in the sentence:

The doctor went to the hospital

the meaning can be unclear or ambiguous.

The translator needs to be mindful of the gender of the subject in English sentences, especially when the subject pronoun is absent. To resolve this ambiguity, the translator has to look for other clues in the text indicating the gender of the subject, which could be located far from the sentence in question, making the translation task more challenging. In contrast, the Arabic language differentiates the gender of the subject through masculine and feminine markers, (Bahumaid, 2010).

Sometimes, a phrase in English may be translated into Arabic by negation using an excessive negation instrument like "what," not because it is intended as a negation, but to add more eloquence

to the phrase. For example, the phrase "if I visit you, I honor you" could be translated into Arabic as "if I don't visit you, what honor do I have?" However, when translating from Arabic to English, this phrase would be rendered as an affirmation because the negation instrument would be redundant.

The translation process is influenced not only by linguistic factors but also by environmental and cultural factors. Words may have different connotations in different languages, which can affect the translation, (Abdelaal, 2020). For example, the moon is associated with romantic beauty in Arab culture, while in English or French culture, it may represent foolishness or lack of innocence. Thus, when translating a phrase such as "a girl is like a moon in her beauty," it is better to translate the intended meaning of the metaphor rather than the metaphor itself, (Husni & Newman, 2015). Similarly, when translating a saying like "Zaid's food may be a poison to Amr," it is unnecessary to mention the names Zaid and Amr, as they may not be familiar to the foreign reader. Instead, the translator should convey the general meaning in an understandable form to the foreign reader, such as "One man's meat is another man's poison."

Similarly, when translating the proverb "Whoever shortens his hand and extends his tongue," it is incorrect to use literal expressions such as "shortening one's hand" or "extending one's tongue" in the translation, as these expressions may not be culturally relevant or understood in another language. Instead, the translator should use an equivalent expression that conveys the same meaning, (Abulhassan, 2014) such as "barking dogs seldom bite," which is more widely understood and accepted.

In addition to translating similes, metaphors, and idioms, translators may also need to provide additional explanations or context to convey cultural and environmental dimensions that underlie certain words, even if they have a corresponding term in the target language, (Hatim & Mason, 2005). For instance, when translating the word "dowry" to another language, the translator may need to include a parenthetical explanation of the concept, particularly in cultures where the dowry is paid by the wife and not the husband. Similarly, translating the word "uncle" into English requires more specificity to accurately convey the intended meaning without ambiguity, such as using the term "paternal uncle" instead of just "uncle." If the specific term in the source language refers to the maternal uncle, the translator should use that term to precisely indicate the relationship.

The translation process in scientific fields can also be impacted by cultural differences. In such cases, the translator may come across local expressions that the reader from a different culture may not comprehend or that are scientifically unfeasible or unacceptable in their general concept, (Kashoob, 1995). For instance, in Arabic literature and references, the term "eradication of insects" is used, which has a literal equivalent in English. However, this translation might appear incorrect to a specialized reader who considers it unrealistic since it is scientifically impossible to entirely "eliminate" insects. Instead, using a different term like "control" in this context would be more acceptable and accurate as per foreign literature and references.

The consequences of literal translation can have severe effects, especially in legal and judicial contexts, (El-Farahaty, 2016). An example is given of an Arab citizen who appeared in an American court on charges of participating in subversive operations. During the prosecution, the citizen became agitated and called in Arabic for God to "ruin" the house of the unjust prosecutor. The interpreter translated the phrase literally as "damage", which reinforced the judge's impression that the accused was violent and involved in vandalism. The judge issued a judgment based on this impression, along with other legal evidence. Had the interpreter conveyed the same phrase in a way that was known to the judge, such as "Oh, you fool" or "God, you're such an idiot", the outcome might have been different. This supports the idea that translation, whether written or immediate, should not always be literal. It should be adapted to suit other cultures and norms to be more acceptable and avoid negative consequences. The challenges related to cross-cultural misunderstandings during interpretation create uncertainty for interpreters, making it difficult to determine whether misunderstandings stem from cultural differences or individual characteristics. It raises the question of whether it falls within the interpreter's responsibility to notify courts and tribunals about possible cross-cultural misunderstandings, (Hale, 2014).

When translating into Arabic, there are phrases that require the translator to take action and not stick to a literal translation, in order to be more acceptable to the Arab reader or listener. This is evident in some translated films where profanity is replaced with softer words like "villain", "fool" and "trivial" to maintain an appropriate level of events. The concept of adaptation and substitution also applies to some scientific texts that may contain scientifically correct expressions but are not acceptable, (Baker, 2018) to the general taste of the Arab reader. For example, the phrase "This invention provides a method for treating cancer in warm-blooded animals such as man and other vertebrates" may require adaptation to be more acceptable. Although the phrase is

scientifically correct, it is not culturally acceptable to mention humans in the context of animals in Arab customs and traditions. Therefore, when translating into Arabic, the translator should replace the word "animals" with a more suitable word such as "beings" or adjust the sentence structure so that "man" appears as the subject rather than an additive. For instance, the phrase "humans and vertebrates" would be more appropriate than "animals like humans and other vertebrates". In summary, it is essential to consider linguistic and cultural aspects in communication and translation to avoid confusion, misunderstandings, and potential negative consequences, (Qassem & Vijayasarithi, 2015).

In essence, linguistic and cultural factors play a vital role in communication and the transfer of information and ideas between different contexts. It is crucial for individuals involved in translation, writing, and speaking to recognize and understand these factors to avoid errors or confusion, (Qassem, 2014). Failing to do so can result in reader or listener dissatisfaction and rejection of the conveyed material, and in some cases, it can even lead to unforeseen consequences.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this academic study sheds light on the linguistic and cultural differences between English and Arabic languages and their significant impact on the translation process. The findings underscore the complexity and challenges inherent in translating between these two languages, highlighting the need for translators to possess a deep understanding of both linguistic structures and cultural nuances. The study emphasizes that grammar, vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, cultural references, religious and legal terminology, as well as worldview and cultural norms, are crucial aspects to consider during translation. The divergent sentence structures and grammatical rules between English and Arabic necessitate skillful manipulation of sentence constructions and word order to ensure accurate and faithful translations. Additionally, the unique vocabularies and idiomatic expressions in each language require translators to be well-versed in cultural context to choose suitable equivalents that convey the intended meaning effectively. Cultural references play a pivotal role in translation, as they reflect the historical, religious, and social backgrounds of Arabic and English-speaking cultures. Translators must possess cultural sensitivity and knowledge to accurately convey references and allusions, thereby fostering cross-cultural understanding. Moreover, the study highlights the challenges posed by religious and legal terminology, which

demand specialized expertise to ensure accurate and culturally appropriate translations. The study also emphasizes that differences in worldview and cultural norms influence language usage, requiring translators to navigate these disparities to convey messages accurately and avoid misinterpretation or offense. Literal word-for-word translations are often insufficient to capture the intended meaning and cultural nuances, underscoring the importance of informed choices by translators, considering both linguistic and cultural aspects. In Summary, this study underscores the significance of linguistic and cultural factors in the translation process between English and Arabic. It highlights the need for translators to possess a comprehensive understanding of both languages and cultures, along with strong interpretative and communicative skills. By acknowledging and addressing these differences, translators can bridge the linguistic and cultural gaps, facilitating successful cross-cultural communication and ensuring accurate and meaningful translations. Further research in this area can contribute to refining translation methodologies and enhancing intercultural understanding in an increasingly interconnected world.

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